

**Yellow in White Suits: Race, Mobility, and Identity among Grown**

**Children of Korean Immigrants**

by

Inseo Son

Department of Sociology  
Duke University

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bai Gao

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kenneth C. Land

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nan Lin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sucheta Mazumdar

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the Department of  
Sociology in the Graduate School  
of Duke University

2014

ABSTRACT

**Yellow in White Suits: Race, Mobility, and Identity among Grown**

**Children of Korean immigrants**

by

Inseo Son

Department of Sociology  
Duke University

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bai Gao

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kenneth C. Land

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nan Lin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sucheta Mazumdar

An abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of  
Sociology in the Graduate School of  
Duke University

2014

Copyright by  
Inseo Son  
2014

## **Abstract**

Children of post-1965 Asian immigrants experience a different mode of social incorporation than other people of color. They achieve marked socioeconomic advancement but racism and discrimination continue to haunt them. Sociologists suggest that the group falls between whites and African Americans in the American racial stratification system. However, scholars know little about how this intermediate position shapes the group's modes of social incorporation and identities. I seek to answer this question by examining the lived experiences of grown children of Korean immigrants. For this research, I draw upon 69 in-depth interviews with upwardly mobile, 1.5- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-generation Korean Americans. I focus my analysis on four distinctive but related aspects of their lives: parental socialization, neighborhood contexts, occupational standing, and racial identity. Utilizing the grounded theory and the critical discourse analyses, I found that the group experiences neither full inclusion into nor exclusion from the white mainstream, but undergoes divergent adaptational experiences due to multiple factors. First, in their upbringing, Asian ethnic advantages and racial marginality did not shape parental expectations for children's success in a uniform way; their influences differ by the parents' class backgrounds. Second, the community contexts where my informants grew up diversify their perception of race relations, leading them to have divergent ideas of social incorporation. The ethnic communities function to refract the influence of the larger society's racial categorization

on the informants, rather than insulating them. Third, the Korean informants' upward mobility in the mainstream labor market does not guarantee full assimilation; their occupations partially determine the extent of incorporation. Korean informants in Asian-clustered occupations are more likely than those in Asian-underrepresented occupations to experience social inclusion while accepting the racialized image of Asians. Finally, my Korean informants do not have homogeneous racial identities; they are diversified by gender and occupational standings. Male respondents and those in Asian-clustered occupations tend to have white-like identities. Also, the majority of my informants have an ambivalent racial identity that denies that they are an "oppressed" minority while endorsing the idea that they are non-white, which reflects their intermediate racial position. By identifying multiple factors in the construction of Asian Americans as racialized subjects, the findings illustrate the distinctive racialization pattern of Asian Americans, a pattern that is qualitatively different from other racial and ethnic groups. Additionally the research confirms the ongoing significance of race in the life chances of Korean Americans.

## **Dedication**

For my parents, Yong-Dong Son and Yong-Woo Lee

# Contents

Abstract .....	iv
Contents.....	vii
List of Tables .....	xi
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1. Study Design .....	4
1.1.1. Sample Description .....	4
1.1.2. The Case: Korean America .....	9
1.1.3. Analytic Strategies: Grounded Theory and Discourse Analyses .....	12
1.2. Dissertation Structure .....	15
2. Racial Intermediacy, Modes of Incorporation, and Identity Formation: A Theoretical Perspective .....	16
2.1. Introduction.....	16
2.2. Asian Americans and the American Racial Stratification System.....	18
2.2.1. Binary Perspective of Racial Hierarchy: A Critique .....	18
2.2.2. Asian Americans and Racial Intermediacy.....	22
2.3. Racial Intermediacy and Modes of Incorporation .....	24
2.3.1. Race, Class, and Parental Socialization .....	25
2.3.2. Community Contexts and Divergent Paths to Incorporation.....	29
2.3.3. The Field of Occupations and Differential Modes of Incorporation .....	31
2.4. Racial Intermediacy and Racial/Ethnic Identities .....	34
2.4.1. Racial Identities and Internal Stratification .....	34

2.4.2. Ethnicity and Re-Ethnicization.....	37
2.5. Analyzing Children of Korean Immigrants: Conclusion.....	39
3. Race, Class, and Parental Expectations.....	43
3.1. Introduction.....	43
3.2. Korean Immigrant Families from Middle-Class Backgrounds.....	45
3.2.1. “Doing Better, Doing Better, but Never Being Told How”: Abstract Expectations for Success.....	45
3.2.2. “Because We’re Different We Have to Do More”: Racial Inequality and Class Mobility.....	50
3.2.3. “My Parents’ Friends Think I’m Successful”: Ethnic Community and Status Elevation.....	56
3.3. Korean Immigrant Families from Lower-Class Backgrounds.....	61
3.4. Conclusion.....	66
4. Community Contexts and Divergent Paths to Incorporation.....	69
4.1. Introduction.....	69
4.1.1. Methodological Strategy.....	70
4.2. Korean Americans from Non-Korea Towns.....	72
4.2.1. Race Relations as Hierarchical Difference.....	72
4.2.2. “I Wanted to Fit-In!”: The Dilemma of Assimilation.....	80
4.3. Korean Americans from Korea Towns.....	85
4.3.1. Race Relations as Cultural Difference.....	85
4.3.2. “I felt limitations on myself!”: The Dilemma of Cultural Inferiority.....	90
4.4. Conclusion.....	96
5. Occupations and Divergent Modes of Incorporation.....	98



5.1. Introduction.....	98
5.1.1. Methodological Strategy.....	100
5.2. Typology of Racial Identification.....	101
5.2.1. Korean Americans with Asian-Clustered Occupations.....	101
5.2.2. Korean Americans with Asian-underrepresented Occupations.....	107
5.3. Discourses of Cultural Racism.....	111
5.3.1. Co-ethnic Othering.....	112
5.3.2. Internalization.....	118
5.4. Conclusion.....	122
6. Racial Identity and Within-Group Racial Stratification .....	125
6.1. Introduction.....	125
6.2. Typology of Racial Identification.....	126
6.3. Discourses of Racism-Minimization .....	131
6.3.1. Styles of Racism-Minimization.....	132
6.3.2. Storylines of Racism-Minimization.....	135
6.4. Conclusion.....	141
7. Conclusion .....	143
7.1. Diversified Paths to Incorporation.....	144
7.2. What Does It Mean to Be Korean American? .....	149
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	152
Appendix B. Respondents' Information.....	162
References .....	165

Biography ..... 183

## List of Tables

Table 1: Sample Characteristics (N=69) .....	8
--	---

## 1. Introduction

I met Taehan in his cozy office at a renowned college, when I was struggling with my research's direction. He has been a tenured professor for fifteen years and has a happy family and nice friends. The interview lasted more than two hours, preventing me from thinking about anything else as I sank into his stories. In my eyes, Taehan is a successful immigrant child. He was born in a middle-class immigrant family; his father came to the U.S. to study for his Ph.D. and settled in a Southern state as a professor. As a smart Asian kid, Taehan did really well in school and became a Ph.D. After a few years of struggle to get a decent job, he obtained a tenure track position in a college near a Korea Town in Northern Virginia.

His life trajectory, from a commonsensical point of view, clearly shows that Taehan is a middle-class, professional "American." His Koreanness seemingly has nothing to do with his career path. Yet he has painful but veiled experiences of being Korean. Taehan said he has not been discriminated much but, at the same time, having non-white skin has affected his "personality." He told me, "As I grew up, I was different from everyone. So I always had this sort of complex. And it is still true today. I sort of just want to fit in. I don't want to stand out." Taehan had never had "blended in" with peers. Moreover, in spite of being a professor for fifteen years, Taehan still feels that he is deficient in writing and social skills when compared to "whites." His deficiency in merit, he believes, results from his cultural background. His strikingly honest statements

culminated in his thoughts about his career. Taehan does not think he has been successful in his career. "Even if I had chosen this profession to be a professor, I feel like I should have done better than this." He also said "I have regrets that I didn't listen to my parents and become a, a doctor." Taehan does not think that he succeeded in American society and his parents' will and society's expectations give him a different picture of "success." In short, in contrast with his objective social standing, being Korean still haunts him.

Taehan's narratives provided me with a fresh look for my dissertation research. As a child of Korean immigrants, he has enjoyed economic success; at the same time, the majority race has treated him as unequal. His life trajectory and his perception of U.S. society are qualitatively different from those of other people of color that prior studies have already documented. My research seeks to fill this gap.

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the massive influx of immigrants from non-European and non-African regions, specifically from Asia and Latin America, has transformed the social and demographic topographies of the U.S., as well as existing race relations. The U.S. immigration policy reform of 1965 facilitated a selective immigration of Asians who are highly educated and skilled, which dramatically changed popular perception of Asian Americans from an inferior race to a "model minority" (Hing 1993; Junn 2007). Unlike other people of color, Asian Americans have enjoyed relatively favorable treatment in the U.S. in recent decades. The group, especially second and third

generations and beyond, has achieved marked socioeconomic advancement as evidenced by its level of education and income, which exceed any other racial/ethnic minority groups (Alba and Nee 2003). Asian Americans also tend to be more easily integrated into the white mainstream in terms of interracial marriage (Lee and Bean 2004). On the other hand, however, they still experience various forms of racism and discrimination (Woo 2000; Chou and Feagin 2008) and are stereotyped as culturally inferior and permanently foreign in society (Hamamoto 1994; Tuan 1998).

Some critical scholars have attempted to understand the unique experiences of Asian Americans when compared to other racial/ethnic minority groups by positioning the group as a “racial middle” (Matsuda 1996) in the American racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva 2002; Kim 1999). According to this perspective, Asian Americans are located between the privileged white race and the “oppressed” minority of African Americans. In spite of its theoretical advancement, there has been a lack of empirical research about the implications of this location on Asian Americans’ lived experiences. If Asian Americans are an intermediate race positioned between whites and blacks, how do Asian Americans experience adaptation into American society and identify themselves relative to their racial position?

This research examines the effect of structural racial position on Korean Americans’ adaptation process and identity formation. I utilize in-depth interviews with upward-mobile 1.5- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-generation Korean Americans. According to the 2010

Census, Korean Americans are the fifth largest Asian-American subgroup, following Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, and Vietnamese (APALC and AAJC 2011). Although Korean immigrants are mainly incorporated into the marginalized small-business fields (Yoon 1997), their children show every sign of having a broad opportunity to succeed in American society, as signified by the high educational achievement of the group that represents the mainstream image of Asian Americans (Min 2006a).

## **1.1. Study Design**

### **1.1.1. Sample Description**

From January 2011 to December 2012, I conducted 69 in-depth interviews<sup>1</sup> with grown children of Korean immigrants who currently live in three locations: New York, the Washington D.C. metropolitan statistical area (hereafter DC) and North Carolina (hereafter NC). New York and DC are the second- and third-largest Korean-concentrated regions, according to the 2000 Census (Min 2006a). New York has been a traditional destination for Asian immigrants for decades, second only to California. Korean Americans are the third-largest Asian population in New York. While Queens, New York, has been a popular borough, Korean Americans have been moving as far as Bergen County in New Jersey and Long Island in New York. Meanwhile, DC has

---

<sup>1</sup> Among 69 respondents, 66 were interviewed one-to-one and three were interviewed through a focus-group meeting.

emerged as a new destination for Korean Americans and became the third-largest Korean population center by 2000 (Min 2006a). Given that a Korean-American business district at Annandale, Virginia, was only established in the late 1980s (Min 2006a), the history of Korean Americans in DC is quite short compared to New York or California. Korean Americans in the DC area are concentrated in Fairfax County, Virginia. Although there is no research on the regional distribution of younger-generation Korean Americans, I chose New York and DC as research sites because it is reasonable to assume that the second generations are concentrated in these metropolitan, Korean-populated areas. I selected NC as a comparison to traditional “Korea Towns.” NC is one of the states where the Asian-American population grew faster than others between 2000 and 2010, along with Nevada and Arizona, when it numbered more than 250,000 (APALC and AAJC 2011). However, no statistically significant distinctions emerged between responses from the three areas.

The interviewees for this study include both second and 1.5 generation Korean Americans. While researchers use a variety of definitions of these two groups, I follow Zhou’s (1999) classification that defines those who are native-born or arrive before they turn 5 as the second generation and those who arrive between 5 and 12 years as the 1.5 generation. The Korean Americans who comprise my sample have all held full-time jobs and all hold a college degree or are currently enrolled in a degree program. The age span of my informants is between the ages of 23 and 52.



I employed snowball sampling due to limitations of access to the target group. I utilized several recruiting strategies to find respondents with diverse living situations and employed in a variety of fields. In each location, I recruited interviewees from a variety of counties. Participants in DC, for instance, include those from Washington D.C.; Fairfax, Virginia; Annandale, Virginia; Centreville, Virginia; and College Park, Maryland. Interviewees in NY include residents of three boroughs of New York City (Flushing, Long Island, and Manhattan) and Palisades Park, New Jersey. In addition, I attempted to diversify sources of referrals. Since ethnic churches are well established in the Korean American community (Min 1992), I mainly utilized local ethnic churches to recruit informants but also used local ethnic organizations, including sports associations and non-profit organizations, and my personal contacts.

All of the interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format including both a prearranged interview protocol and open-ended interviewing procedure. This interview protocol provides researchers with a base of comparison across interviewees by asking all of them similar questions (Johnson and Weller 2002). Apart from complementing for the prearranged interviewing, open-ended interviewing aims to create a life history and map out the racial formation processes from childhood to present. The life history approach is especially useful for qualitative researchers to understand “the sequence and patterning of life events” (Blee 1996) so as to identify quasi-causal factors influencing interviewees’ life choices. In addition, life history

interviewing, asks interviewees to provide narratives, stories through which they interpret their surrounding social world by their experiences (Somers 1994). A narrative, thus, offers an understanding of how actors make sense of their social world and how they identify themselves based on their understanding (Blee 1996). The original interview protocol explores respondents' life-historical experiences from childhood to the present: parents' socialization; school and campus experiences; friendship from childhood to workplaces; educational and occupational aspirations; career trajectories; views on success and social status; perceptions of racial and ethnic inequality; and romantic relationships.

All interviews were conducted in person in public places; they were tape-recorded and later transcribed by a professional transcription service. The interviews lasted from one to three hours. I also interviewed several Korean immigrants who have grown children, 1.5 and second-generation students, and community leaders, to acquire background information, but omitted these interviews from the data.

**Table 1: Sample Characteristics (N=69)**

Characteristic	N	% <sup>a</sup>
Region		
New York	28	40.6
Washington D.C.	23	33.3
North Carolina	18	26.1
Age		
20 - 29	22	31.9
30 - 39	28	40.6
40 - 49	16	23.2
50+	3	4.3
Gender		
Male	34	49.3
Female	35	50.7
Generation		
Second (immigrated at age 0-4)	52	75.4
1.5 (immigrated at age 5-12)	17	24.6
Education		
BA (or currently in college)	44	63.8
MA and Higher	25	36.2
Father's Education		
High School	8	11.6
BA and Higher	51	73.9
Non-response	10	14.5
Father's Job (in US)		
Small Business	39	56.5
Professional	21	30.4
Other	8	11.6
Non-response	1	1.4

<sup>a</sup> Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

### **1.1.2. The Case: Korean America**

In this research, I take Korean Americans as an empirical case. Although the term “Asian Americans” is often regarded as referring to a homogeneous racial/ethnic group in public media and academia (for instance, see Sakamoto et al. 2009), it includes a variety of heterogeneous ethnic groups, such as Chinese, Filipino, Cambodian, Hmong, Pakistani, and Indian. These groups vary by culture, socioeconomic status, religion, and skin color. Unlike whites who enjoy relative freedom to choose their ethnic options (Alba 1990; Waters 1990), however, Asian-origin groups are categorized under Asian American as a racialized umbrella term in American society regardless of their national origins (Kibria 2000; Tuan 1998). These groups, including Korean Americans, share similar experiences of being labeled a subordinate and inferior race, while other factors, such as class, culture, and religion, contribute to marked variation between the groups.

Except for a negligible number of early immigrants on Hawaii and the West Coast prior to the 1960s, the history of Korean America started with the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hing 1993). The inflow of Koreans in the U.S. continued to increase until the late 1980s, decreasing afterwards, and the Korean American population has reached over 1.7 million in 2010, according to the census (Min 2006a; APALC and AAJC 2011). Korean Americans are currently the fifth largest Asian American ethnic group, following Chinese, Filipino, Indian, and Vietnamese. A significant portion of the Korean immigrants, especially those in the early periods, are

highly educated and have urban middle-class backgrounds (Yoon 1997). There was imbalance between the oversupply of educated labor forces and the lagged demand for them in South Korea during the 1960s and 1970s (Min 2006a). The service- and technology-oriented restructuring of the U.S. economy increased domestic demand for high-skilled labor forces (Ong et al. 1994).

In spite of their relatively high level of human capital, many Korean immigrants have been incorporated in the marginalized small business sector (Yoon 1997). They have settled in traditional immigrant-concentrated areas, such as Los Angeles and New York and established small businesses to serve co-ethnics or lower-class populations. As scholars have extensively documented, their businesses have been quite successful, partly due to the group's relative advantage in human and financial resources and strong ethnic solidarity (Kim 1981; Min 1988). Nonetheless, first-generation Korean Americans have been segregated economically, culturally, and spatially, from the mainstream.

Unlike first generation immigrants, later generations are incorporating into the mainstream economy through the path of "selective assimilation" — socioeconomic advancement coupled with maintained ethnicity (Portes and Zhou 1993). By virtue of immigrant parents' high level of education and strong ethnic norms and values, 1.5- and 2<sup>nd</sup>- generation Korean Americans achieve a higher level of educational achievements than their parents, even than non-Hispanic whites (Min 2006a). Educational

achievement helps them climb up into the mainstream labor market, in many cases, into professional occupations (Min 2006a). Similar to other Asian Americans, later-generation Korean Americans are more likely than white counterparts to choose STEM<sup>2</sup>- and healthcare-related majors and occupations (Xie and Goyette 2004; Min and Jang 2013). Not only do their parents' educational backgrounds and cultural heritages contribute to their concentration in "Asian field of occupations" (Wong 1980; Kim 1993; Min and Jang 2013); but their marginalized status shapes the group's unique mobility path (Sue and Okazaki 1990; Xie and Goyette 2003). The intergenerational mobility of Korean Americans has shown a marked improvement; later-generation Korean Americans are becoming middle class.

Although children of Korean immigrants acquire middle-class status, it is still questionable whether they are being assimilated into the mainstream with whites. Asian Americans have historically been labelled as a subordinate race since the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Chinese laborers were first immigrated into the U.S. (Hing 1993). The Civil Rights Movements and the ensuing improvements in human rights post-Jim Crow have brought Asian Americans, as well as other people of color, relative racial equality. Asian Americans have often been praised as a "model minority" by the public media for the group's relative socioeconomic success since the mid-sixties. However, the label of

---

<sup>2</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

model minority conceals the ongoing racialization of Asian Americans in American society (Wu 2002). Asian Americans are still behind non-Hispanic whites in income level (Kim and Sakamoto 2010) and are discriminated against in a variety of social domains (Chou and Feagin 2008; Woo 2000). Studies suggest that the group, including Korean Americans, is still racialized in the American racial stratification system, not only as an inferior race, but also as a unassimilable “foreigner” (Kim 1999).

### **1.1.3. Analytic Strategies: Grounded Theory and Discourse Analyses**

In this study, I utilize two primary methods to analyze the data: the grounded theory (Charmaz 2006) and the critical discourse analyses (Van Dijk 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2006). First, the grounded theory analysis is best suited to examine how subjective experiences are socially constructed (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001) and enable researchers to find unexpected themes from data while existing theories guide them. Following Charmaz (2006), I consider interviewing not as fixed process but an accumulative and interactive one. I revised the interviews based on the analysis of previous data and refined the potential analyses from newly collected data. This interactive process allows me not just to rely on their existing theoretical framework; rather, I constructed and tested emerging theoretical insights from data through repetitive “saturation” (Small 2009).

I conducted three distinct coding steps to analyze the interview data. The initial phase includes the coding of interview scripts and field notes. I utilized qualitative analysis software, NVivo, to analyze the data through the entire coding processes. I first began coding the data into topical and thematic categories based on the existing theoretical perspectives. The initial categories, for instance, contain parental socialization, neighborhood contexts, educational aspirations, career trajectories, and experiences with racism. I concurrently sought to identify emerging variables, processes, and themes that are not expected in the existing studies, and therefore used “open coding” (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

In the second stage of coding I used axial coding (Charmaz 2006). Based on the previously coded categories, I reexamined and reorganized the emergent variables and processes to build potential relationships among them. By linking the categories, axial coding helps develop an “analytic frame” (Strauss and Corbin 1990) to make sense of the clusters of the categories. In a final coding step, theoretical coding (Charmaz 2006), I developed hypotheses, or “stories,” by which the categories and subcategories are linked to one another into coherent statements. Theoretical coding contributes to developing a potential theory integrating the hypotheses that are developed through a series of coding.

I also employ a critical discursive analysis to examine respondents’ narratives. The critical discursive analysis is best suited to investigate ideological influences on



social agents by allowing researchers to identify multi-layered discursive structures (Van Dijk 2006). Not only have civil-right policies banned visible and violent forms of racism and discrimination in public, but contemporary color-blind racism allows mainstream whites to preserve their privilege with more tacit and invisible tools (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Bobo et al. 1997). Moreover, people of color are discouraged on a societal level from reporting or identifying racism (Essed 1991). Asian Americans are less likely than other racial minority groups to lodge claims of suffering racism, partly due to their culture (Hirsh and Lyons 2010; Kuo 1995; Kim 2011). My Korean American respondents are not exceptional in this regard. The discourse analysis helps researchers examine the influence of invisible racism and discrimination on racial minorities.

To examine multi-layered elements of racism, I utilize Bonilla-Silva's (2006) typology of color-blind racism: frame, style, and storyline. A racist frame is an "interpretive repertoire" (Wetherell and Potter 1992) by which members of a society are guided to think of and interpret racial inequality in a certain way that the privileged race sets. According to Bonilla-Silva (2006), there are four main racist frames prevalent in contemporary American society: abstract liberalism, cultural racism, naturalization, and minimization of racism. When utilized in discourses, the racist frames are articulated by additional linguistic/rhetorical and argumentative strategies. A discursive style, or a semantic move, refers to linguistic, lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical components in discourses to make sense of speakers' views to listeners (Van Dijk 2006; Van Dijk 1987;

Bonilla-Silva 2006). A storyline designates an argumentative strategy to justify and rationalize speakers' assertions (Van Dijk 2006; Van Dijk 1992). While the racist frames are shared by members of a society, including whites and racial minorities, the styles and storylines vary by race and contexts (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

## **1.2. Dissertation Structure**

In the following chapters, I first introduce the triracial perspective that places Asian Americans between whites and blacks and elaborates how the conception of an intermediate race helps better understand the adaptation experiences of my Korean respondents (Chapter 2). I then elaborate how the structural position of Korean Americans as an intermediate race shapes the incorporation process and identity formation. The distinctive adaptation experiences and identity construction of my respondents are analyzed specifically focusing on the association of parental socialization and mobility perceptions (Chapter 3), the role of community contexts in adaptational experiences (Chapter 4), the differentiated occupational incorporation (Chapter 5), and the differentiated understanding of experienced racism (Chapter 6). The last chapter (Chapter 7) summarizes the findings and discusses the contributions of the research.

## **2. Racial Intermediacy, Modes of Incorporation, and Identity Formation: A Theoretical Perspective**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the massive influx of immigrants from non-European and non-African regions, mainly from Asia and Latin America, has raised an old but renewed question of immigrant incorporation (Alba and Nee 2003). Compared to the early immigrants, mostly from European countries, who were seamlessly integrated into American society, post-1965 immigrants and their later generations face different challenges in their path to assimilation, for instance, in terms of economic situations, immigration policies, and social acceptance (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Among them, racial inequality is a crucial factor shaping the modes and consequences of social incorporation of non-white immigrants, especially those of “New Second Generations” (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993). Children of immigrants are destined to navigate their lives in a society where every person of color is subordinated to whites in almost every aspect of lives, including mobility and social interactions (Omi and Winant 1994). Understanding the lived experiences of Korean immigrant children includes identifying not only a social process by which they are incorporated into the society’s economy and culture, but also how they are integrated as people of color into the racial hierarchy.

In this chapter, I seek to rearticulate the existing theoretical frameworks of immigrant incorporation of the new second generation by locating the racialization process as its core variable. I examine how the racialization process complicates the

modes of incorporation of immigrant second-generations. The chapter specifically pays attention to a distinctive racialization process of Asian Americans in general, and Korean Americans specifically, when compared to other ethnoracial groups (Bonilla-Silva 2002; Kim 1999). Prior literature has often relied on the traditional framework of racial stratification based on a white-black dichotomy, failing to elaborate distinctive characteristics of Asian Americans (Okihiro 1994; Matsuda 1996). Focusing on the unique location of Asian Americans in the American racial hierarchy helps understand how the group is included and excluded in society differently from other ethnoracial groups, as well as the early European immigrants.

In the following sections, I first examine the transformation of the American stratification system and its implications for the racialization of Asian Americans. A review of prior literature reveals limitations of the binary perspective of racial stratification and highlights Asian Americans as an intermediate race. The triangulated racialization of Asian Americans provides a better understanding of the adaptation experiences of Korean Americans. The second section is dedicated to explore how the racialization process interacts with class mobility and social interaction processes, shaping the modes of incorporation of minority immigrant children. Rather than a unilinear convergence to assimilation, the review highlights how the path to incorporation is diversified by multiple factors and how the unique racialization of Asian Americans complicates the adaptation processes. Third, I explore how the

triangulated racialization and the diversified modes of incorporation shape subjective understandings of the social world. By reviewing prior literature on racial/ethnic identities, I highlight the multidimensional characteristic of racial/ethnic identities among minority immigrant children, rather than the one-dimensional one, as shaped by interactions of race, region, and occupation.

## ***2.2. Asian Americans and the American Racial Stratification System***

In this section, I examine the immigration and race literature, with a focus on the structural position of Asian Americans in the American stratification system. I compare the studies based on a binary perspective of race relations with those in a multi-layered perspective. I focus the review on where Asian Americans belong in the American racial hierarchy and which perspective is better suited to investigate the lived experiences of Asian Americans.

### **2.2.1. Binary Perspective of Racial Hierarchy: A Critique**

Recent scholarship has developed new perspectives of racial stratification beyond the dichotomous white and black divide to locate Asian Americans. One line of research maintains the binary divide by extending the boundaries of the mainstream and/or the minority (Lee and Bean 2004; Skrentny 2001; Hollinger 2005; Yancey 2003). According to this perspective, Asian Americans are categorized by their relative

proximity to whites or blacks. However, there is no scholarly consensus on the racial position of Asian Americans. Some scholars find this group similar to whites with regard to socioeconomic status and a high rate of intermarriage (Yancey 2003; Lee and Bean 2004), while others find that Asian Americans' experience of racism is closer to blacks (Skrentny 2001; Hollinger 2005).

One branch of research on the "whitening" of Asian Americans stresses the role of class mobility in immigrant incorporation. According to the assimilation perspective, socioeconomic attainment including education, occupation, and income, is a determining factor for assimilation of the post-1965 immigrant groups (Alba and Nee 2003; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Not only do socioeconomic attainments correspond with economic advancement of immigrant groups, but they are closely related to assimilation mediated by increased participation in mainstream institutions and acculturation into the society's culture and norms (Alba and Nee 2003). By individually endeavoring to succeed in their new home, immigrants and their children intentionally or unintentionally increase their interactions with schools, the labor market, and mainstream individuals and adjust to the norms and values of the mainstream. The Civil Right Movement and an ensuing series of policy reforms have also facilitated the newly immigrant groups' social mobility and assimilation into the white majority (Wilson 1978; Sakamoto et al. 2000).

For this whitening literature, race is no longer a determining variable shaping the economic and social incorporation of non-white post-1965 immigrants, while it still affects many aspects of their lives (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Racial distinctions have been losing their significance in major social institutions (Alba and Nee 2003) and are reducible to cultural and ethnic differences. Asian Americans are not an exception in this regard. The whitening literature often emphasizes the group's socioeconomic advancement with respect to income and education level, especially among second and third generations and beyond, and concludes that racial inequality does not matter significantly for the group's incorporation (Portes and Zhou 1993; Sakamoto et al. 2009). The group's ethnic traits contribute to, rather than restrict, assimilation by providing a strong work ethic and group solidarity (Portes and Zhou 1993). In addition to the economic advancement, Asian Americans have shown improvement in social integration, such as interracial marriage and residential integration with whites, which accelerates the group's assimilation by class mobility (Lee and Bean 2004; Li 2009). The literature predicts that later-generation Asian Americans experience a significant level of incorporation into the American mainstream, which leads them to become "white" (Yancey 2003; Lee and Bean 2004).

By contrast, another line of literature, which I call the "collective minority" perspective, highlights the ongoing effect of race on the adaptation process of Asian Americans. In the U.S., race is embedded in the social system where the privileged race

benefits (Omi and Winant 1994; Bonilla-Silva 1997). Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, similar to other racial minorities, Asian Americans have historically been subordinated to whites as an inferior race, and recent Asian immigrants are no exception (Espiritu 2008; Hing 1993). The collective minority literature highlights the similarity of the group to other racial minorities. Asian Americans often become a target of racism and discrimination in various social institutions and individual interactions (Woo 2000; Chou and Feagin 2008; Alvarez et al. 2006) and are stereotyped as culturally inferior and perpetually foreign (Hamamoto 1994; Tuan 1998).

The adaptation process of Asian Americans is shaped by the inextricable interaction of race with other factors. Class mobility is just one measure of a group's level of assimilation (Zhou and Lee 2007). The rapid socioeconomic advancement of the recent Asian immigrant group is not just facilitated by the decreasing impact of the racial distinction in the mainstream, but by the growing demand for technical and service workforces in the domestic labor market and the ensuing selective migration for skilled, educated populations from Asian countries (Ong et al. 1994; Junn 2007). Despite their high educational level, the group is still underrepresented in managerial positions and suffers from a lack of occupational diversity, which results from the continuous racial effect on the group mobility (Kim 2008a). The group's socioeconomic achievements, moreover, do not guarantee full membership in the white mainstream with respect to "social citizenship" (Jung 2009); they are not able to identify themselves



as “Americans” but described as “Asians” who have distinctive “culture” and are “unassimilable” to U.S. society (Tuan 1998; Kibria 2000).

The collective minority perspective contributes to a better understanding of how Asian Americans are integrated in society by considering the interaction of race with other socioeconomic variables and the multidimensional aspects of immigrant incorporation. These studies, however, pay more attention to the commonalities shared by different ethnoracial groups and fail to highlight significant variation in racialization among them (Kim 1999). The following chapter introduces an emerging perspective on the structural position of Asian Americans.

### **2.2.2. Asian Americans and Racial Intermediacy**

The post-1965 Asian immigrant groups differ in their incorporation experiences from the early Asian immigrants, as well as from other contemporary ethnoracial groups. The U.S. immigration policy reform of 1965 facilitated a selective immigration of Asians who are highly educated and skilled, which dramatically changed popular perception of Asian Americans from an inferior race to a “model minority” (Hing 1993; Junn 2007). Since *The New York Times* published William Peterson’s “Success Story, Japanese-American Style,” in 1966, public media and politicians have lauded Asian Americans for their socially-favorable cultural values (Kim 1999). Studies suggest that

whites have more favorable attitudes toward Asian Americans than toward Latinos or African Americans (Bobo and Johnson 2000; Xu and Lee 2013).

The multi-layered stratification perspective criticizes the biracial perspective by stressing variation among racial groups (Kim 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2002). Certain racial groups, according to this perspective, receive relatively equal treatments from the majority race, being allowed to occupy enhanced economic and social status in the racial hierarchy, while remaining a subordinate minority. East Asians and light-skinned Latinos fall in between whites and blacks. Claire J. Kim (1999) claims that certain racial groups, specifically Asian Americans, are positioned in the middle in the racial stratification system not only by the process of racial “valorization,” but also by the process of “civic ostracism.” In other words, Asian Americans are considered superior to African Americans by the majority of whites (Xu and Lee 2013); but the group is regarded inassimilable, as “forever foreigners” compared to whites and blacks (Tuan 1998).

Although Kim’s (1999) racial triangulation theory contributes to better understanding of the distinctive experiences of Asian Americans, it fails to fully consider the influences of a new racism on the racial stratification system. In addition to the demographic change of ethnoracial populations since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, according to Bonilla-Silva (2002), the “new white supremacy,” which replaced the previous Jim Crow racism, is characterized by the relaxation of racial oppression and categorization. This

new racism allows limited but significant intervention of multiple factors on racial classification, such as class, phenotype, culture, and education. This multidimensional transformation of the racial stratification system allows some segments of racial groups to occupy the racial middle, and even to become fully white. Bonilla-Silva's (2002) triracial stratification perspective predicts internal stratification within each minority group, as well as differentiation between the racial groups. This perspective, thus, suggests that Asian Americans also experience internal stratification within and between Asian ethnic subgroups.

The triracial perspective provides a better framework, compared to the binary racial view, to examine the incorporation process of Korean Americans who experience economic integration with educational achievements but suffer from social and cultural exclusion. This view allows researchers to investigate how multiple factors complicate, rather than replace, the racialization process of Korean Americans.

### ***2.3. Racial Intermediacy and Modes of Incorporation***

In this section, I review the existing literature on the modes of immigrant incorporation by focusing on three distinctive aspects: parental socialization, community context, and occupations. Examining the empirical studies, I highlight the competing arguments of unilinear and divergent modes of immigrant incorporation in the case of later-generation Asian Americans.

### **2.3.1. Race, Class, and Parental Socialization**

Sociologists and immigration scholars have examined the socialization process of Asian immigrant families largely in terms of an educational perspective (for a review, see Sakamoto et al. 2009). The research, based on the socioeconomic attainment model (Sewell and Hauser 1980), focuses on the factors shaping a high level of educational performances. Relatively rich educational and financial resources (Sun 1998; Barringer et al. 1990), strong work ethics (Chen and Stevenson 1995; Wong 1980; Min 1998), and tightly knit ethnic networks (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou and Kim 2006) are responsible for the high level of educational achievement. The studies stress the positive role of parental socialization as a key mechanism that facilitates the transmission of the resources to the children (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

This educational perspective on the group's socialization, in many cases, is based on a normative assumption of social mobility that reflects the merit ideology held by middle-class whites (Hochschild 1995; McNamee and Miller 2004; Zhou and Lee 2007). Similar to the long-held popular perception of Asian Americans that attributes the group's success to cultural values that resemble those of middle-class whites (Petersen 1966), many studies focus on the role of ethnic values on the group's social mobility (Min 1998; Kim 1993; Chen and Stevenson 1995). Emphasis on the role of ethnic values in child socialization, however, tends to assume that Asian American children,

regardless of their ascribed status including class and race, experience a unilinear path to assimilation (Kim 2008a).

By contrast, the “marginality” perspective (Xie and Goyette 2003) stresses the impact of race and immigration status, on the family socialization processes that shapes the lives of children (for a review, see McLoyd et al. 2000; Swartz 2009). First, racial minority families are disadvantaged in transmitting to children material advantages that are crucial to advance in schools, social interactions, and the labor market. They have insufficient financial and educational resources partly because of their relatively lower-class status (Sarkisian et al. 2007; Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004). Although many Asian immigrant families are better off than other racial minority families, South-Asian immigrants including Hmong and Cambodians and a significant portion of East Asians have failed to uplift their economic status in the new country (APALC and AAJC 2011). Little is known in academia about the childrearing practices among these lower-class Asian families. The few studies show that lower-class Asian parents’ backgrounds undermine the positive effect of ethnic values and community influences on their children (Lew 2006; Louie 2004).

Second, minority families are disadvantaged in terms of their culturally marginal status. They are less aware of what constitutes advantages in the mainstream, due to lack of knowledge, social networks, and experiences (Stanton-Salazar 1997; Beasley 2011; Lee and Kao 2009). Asian-American families also suffer limited access to mainstream

social and cultural resources, such as educational institutions and cultural capital, leading to disadvantages in parenting practices (Lee and Kao 2009; Kao and Tienda 1995). Their childrearing practices, as well as other life courses, are under constant influence of racial/ethnic stereotypes and ideologies. Many minority groups have nontraditional family structures, influenced by the larger historical and structural processes, which burdens children with additional family responsibilities and obligations other than schooling (Burton 1996; Song 1999; Chung 2013). Also, their parenting cultures and practices are under constant criticism by mainstream family ideologies (Stack 1974). Also, the childrearing culture of Asian-American families is often criticized by the mainstream for its authoritarian and patriarchal traits, which the mainstream feels negatively affects children's self-esteem and identity (Pyke 2000).

Race scholarship on Asian Americans pays further attention to cultural aspects of parenting practices that are qualitatively distinct from other minority families. Studies focus on situated meanings and values that Asian immigrant families place on children's success (Sue and Okazaki 1990; Xie and Goyette 2003; Louie 2004). Sue and Okazaki (1990), for instance, claim that Asian immigrant parents' mobility expectations for children, as well as their children's career aspirations, are shaped by their understanding of a racialized labor market: they push children to pursue certain careers with lower barriers against minorities, such as those where educational certificates provide access. STEM and healthcare fields are often preferred among Asian-American families because of this racialized consideration (Louie 2004). Also, Asian American families have a

collective sense of child success in childrearing (Kibria 2002; Louie 2004). In a study of second-generation Chinese young adults, Louie (2004) shows that by describing parents' hardship as immigrants as a "sacrifice" to children, parents socialize their children to have high aspiration for success for the entire family. These studies highlight the subtle ways in which sociocultural marginality shapes complicated meanings and values surrounding parenting practices.

The marginality literature also stresses racial socialization as a crucial strait among minority families' childrearing practices (Hughes et al. 2006). Asian-origin parents transmit to their children cultural heritage, ethnic language, and cultural values to promote ethnic pride (Ou and McAdoo 1993). They prepare children to face discrimination with racial/ethnic pride and other tools. Nonetheless, they are less likely to share practical lessons about prejudice and discrimination with children than African American parents (Nagata 1993; Chen 1998). Studies suggest that being neither white nor black, Asian Americans have a different perception of race relations (Kim 2008b; Dhingra 2003), which might be reflected in a distinct racial socialization.

Overall, although the educational focus of Asian American families' parenting highlights the role of ethnic values and networks in creating a higher level of social mobility of Asian immigrant children, the marginality perspective provides a better understanding of how multiple factors including immigration, race, class, and culture shape the group's childrearing practices.

### **2.3.2. Community Contexts and Divergent Paths to Incorporation**

Residential segregation literature has long examined the racial effect of spatial concentration of racial minority groups and highlighted its negative consequences on their life chances (Massey and Denton 2008; Wilson 1987). Asian American communities have also been concentrated in certain areas due to marginalized economic opportunities and racism (Zhou 1992; Min 1996). Unlike other people of color, researchers have stressed the positive effects of Asian ethnic communities on their life chances. Although the communities chronically suffer from fewer economic opportunities and lack of access to social and cultural resources, the segregated communities provide alternative forms of financial loans (Yoon 1997) and jobs (Zhou 1992), social cohesion (Portes and Zhou 1993), and a protected environment from discrimination (Mossakowski 2003; Walton 2012). The community also positively impacts the social mobility of second generation Asians by providing a variety of ethnic educational institutions (Zhou and Kim 2006).

However, race scholars have criticized this ethnic community model of Asian Americans for failing to reflect differential settlement pattern of the group. Although the majority of Asian immigrants have been settled in a few areas, such as Los Angeles and New York, a significant number of Asians have decided to settle in a variety of places (Min 2006b; for second generations, see Kibria 2002; Tuan 1998). Even those in



traditional Asian-populated areas tend to live and attend school in integrated areas, while they work in ethnic enclaves (Li 2009). Furthermore, the model often ignores the impact of the larger society and assumes that those in the ethnic enclaves are insulated from racial prejudices (Portes and Zhou 1993). Asian immigrant children, however, grow up in incessant contact with social institutions, neighbors, peers, and mass media that contribute to the racialization of Asian Americans (Pyke 2000; Lee 1996).

The critical race scholars focus on how the community mediates the impact of the larger society's racial categorization on its minority members. Studies present several mechanisms by which the racial categorization of the larger society affects the adaptation of Asian immigrant children in the community contexts. In a study on an Asian-populated high school, for instance, Lee (1996) illustrates how the larger structure of race shapes admission, teacher-student relations, and peer interactions. Also, co-ethnic interactions, even those that seem non-racial, are influenced by racial categories. Asian American youths often split into factions divided by whether they are "Americanized," and internalize the negative stereotypes of Asians by labeling those who are not Americanized as inferior (Pyke and Dang 2003; Pyke and Johnson 2003). These studies highlight how local contexts, such as schools and peer interactions, mediate the racial effect on Asian American youths. However, there are few studies on how different community contexts differentiate their adaptation process. In a study on second-generation Korean and Chinese Americans, Kibria (2002) illustrates how the

different racial composition of communities diversifies their incorporation experiences, including their prospect for assimilation and their racial/ethnic identities. Those from predominantly white communities are likely to discard their ethnicity and choose to be assimilated because of racism, which contrast with those from the ethnic enclave.

In short, the ethnic community argument contributes to elaborating the role of the ethnic community in facilitating social mobility of minority children; however, it often ignores the impact of larger society's racial categorization on the community members. The race perspective provides a better understanding of how the ethnic community mediates the societal impact of race, but a comparative examination of different community contexts is needed to investigate the adaptation experience of Asian American youths.

### **2.3.3. The Field of Occupations and Differential Modes of Incorporation**

Literature on middle-class racial minorities has long shown that neither class nor occupational status can replace racial status (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Cose 1993; Pattillo 1999; Feagin 2014). People of color are disadvantaged in class elevation, in employment (Fernandez 2006; Pager 2005), wages (Huffman and Cohen 2004), career building (Tomaskovic-Devey et al. 2005), and workplace interactions (Cose 1993; Wingfield 2010; Wingfield and Alston 2013). Moreover, middle-class racial minorities suffer from racism in public places, housing markets, and neighborhoods (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Pager and

Shepherd 2008; Lacy 2007). These studies highlight how people of color do not enjoy the same class and occupational status as whites.

However, the whitening perspective stresses that Asian Americans have enjoyed relatively favorable treatment in employment and in workplaces when compared to other people of color. Despite a significant rate of discrimination in the labor market (Woo 2000; Chou and Feagin 2008; Kim 2008b; Kibria 2002), Asian Americans are more likely than any other racial minority groups to get jobs in professional occupations and join the middle class (Alba and Nee 2003). There is a controversy in the research on whether or not upwardly mobile Asian American segments are integrating to the white mainstream. The whitening perspective predicts that improved occupational status leads the group to full incorporation (Lee and Bean 2004; Yancey 2003), while the collective minority view stresses the ongoing effect of race on middle-class Asian Americans (Kim 2008a).

One of the distinctive features of Asian Americans' occupational mobility is the groups' concentration on STEM- and healthcare-related fields (Xie and Goyette 2004; Min and Jang 2013). Selective migration of Asian immigrants is one major determining factor for this concentration (Ong et al. 1994; Min and Jang 2013). Though having a lower level of concentration than the first generation immigrants, later-generation Asian Americans continue to choose to hold these occupations. Many studies focus on the mechanisms through which Asian immigrant children are pulled into particular

occupations, from the cultural framework (Wong 1980; Kim 1993; Min 1998) to the marginality perspective (Sue and Okazaki 1990; Xie and Goyette 2003; Louie 2004). These studies stress multiple factors, including culture, immigration selection, and race, that influence individual career choices.

Race scholars have long examined the association between occupations and racialization. Studies show that the U.S. labor market is racially segregated and the minority-populated occupations are often “devalued” in society (Huffman and Cohen 2004). Moreover, certain occupations are considered in society to be more appropriate to certain racial groups in tandem with the racialization of racial minorities’ talents and merit. Similar to African Americans who are regarded as naturally talented in sports and music, the model minority myth racialized Asian Americans as naturally merited in science- and math-related occupations (Taylor et al. 2005). The occupational racialization of racial minorities might not only influences individual career paths, but also the degree of incorporation of minorities in the labor market and workplaces (For African Americans, see Hoberman 1997). However, little is known in the literature about how the occupational racialization of Asian Americans affects the occupational adaptation of later-generation Asian Americans.

In brief, the whitening argument highlights the difference in occupational incorporation between Asian Americans in general and other people of color, arguing for the Asian Americans’ successful integration into the labor market. The racialization

argument suggests the association between occupational incorporation and the racialization of minorities' talent and merit, which create differential modes of incorporation among Asian Americans in the labor market.

## ***2.4. Racial Intermediacy and Racial/Ethnic Identities***

In this section, I review the existing literature on racial and ethnic identities of Asian Americans, with a focus on the association of the structural position in the racial hierarchy and the identity formation. I stress two competing perspectives: binary and triangulated identity formations.

### **2.4.1. Racial Identities and Internal Stratification**

Prior studies on racial identities of Asian Americans mainly focus on the group's representations relative to whites (Dhingra 2003). The whitening argument highlights narrowing distances in the group's identification with the white mainstream (Yancey 2003), while the collective minority argument emphasizes the group's ongoing recognition as a minority (Kibria 2002; Tuan 1998). Neither whites nor blacks, Asian Americans navigate their lives in relation not only to the white mainstream, but also to other people of color, for instance, as seen in several inter-minority conflicts such as the L.A. riots of 1992 (Abelmann and Lie 1995; Kim 2000). However, little is known in the literature about how Asian Americans identify themselves in view of both whites and

other people of color, especially African Americans (for exception, see Dhingra 2003; O'Brien 2008).

The triracial perspective sheds light on the identity formation of Asian Americans relative to both whites and blacks. The perspective predicts that Asian Americans as “honorary whites” are likely to hold affinity with whites and distance themselves from darker-skinned minorities (Bonilla-Silva 2002). Empirical evidence demonstrates Asian Americans’ pro-white and anti-black (and anti-Latino) attitudes (Bobo and Johnson 2000; Dhingra 2003). Similarly, the group in general is more likely than other racial/ethnic minority groups to endorse color-blind policies (Bobo and Johnson 2000).

The historical studies on whiteness have shown that racial identification of emergent immigrants is triangulated between whiteness and blackness. According to Roediger (1999), Irish immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who were at first regarded as a near-black race, succeeded in white identification by symbolically dissociating from blacks. The Chinese who moved into Mississippi during the early twentieth century were able to achieve “white-like” status not just by acculturation; they succeeded in status elevation through collective identity work to dissociate with blacks (Loewen 1988; Bow 2010). The recent non-white immigrants also face a similar identificational challenge when acculturation, or white identification, is not enough to create assimilation; successful assimilation also depends on symbolic dissociation from blacks

(Waters 1999). The symbolic dissociation with blacks, in addition, requires the minorities not only to socially disconnect with blacks, but also to endorse the racial norms and ideology of the white mainstream (Roediger 1999; Bow 2010). Asian Americans also attempt to distance themselves from blacks by approving racial norms, such as black cultural inferiority (Dhingra 2003).

A unique challenge for Asian Americans, unlike the early European immigrants, is that black dissociation does not guarantee assimilating to a white mainstream. As a “racialized ethnic,” Asian Americans remain “honorary” whites rather than becoming white (Tuan 1998). The racial norms tied with black dissociation continue to racialize Asian Americans as a minority. Nonetheless, for this intermediate group, dissociating with blacks and sticking with racial norms are necessary to maintain the group’s elevated social status (Bow 2010). The racial identification of Asian Americans, thus, is characterized by its *ambivalence; they symbolically deny being an “oppressed” minority and, at the same time, endorse being non-white*. Empirical studies have shown that Asian Americans tend to verbally downplay the significance of experienced racism in their lives in an effort to distance themselves from the oppressed minority image (O'Brien 2008). These studies suggest a correlation of the group’s unique discursive practices to the group’s structural position, mainly regarding black dissociation (Chou and Feagin 2008; Dhingra 2007; O'Brien 2008). My findings further propose that the discourses

surrounding the experiences with racism are associated with their identificational ambivalence regarding both black dissociation and white disidentification.

The binary perspective of racial identity of Asian Americans focuses on the group's representation relative to only the dominant race. The emerging view of a triracial identity considers the identity formation in which individuals represent themselves relative to both whites and blacks, which predicts that the group's racial identity is characterized by its ambivalence, claiming being neither white nor black, and internal stratification.

#### **2.4.2. Ethnicity and Re-Ethnicization**

Research on ethnic identities among Asian immigrant children concentrated on the group's retention of ethnicity and its impact on adaptational experiences (Pyke and Dang 2003: 149; for instance, Min 2002; Min and Kim 2000; Bacon 1999; Zhou and Bankston 1998; Purkayastha 2005; Min 2010). The studies highlight the positive effect of ethnic pride and solidarity on children's identities. Although the literature includes race as a crucial variable shaping identities, little attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which being non-white influences group identity formation.

Race scholars have emphasized an intertwined relationship between race and ethnicity among Asian Americans (Kibria 2002; Tuan 1998). In contrast with European Americans who enjoy a full degree of freedom in ethnic identification (Waters 1990;



Alba 1990), Asian Americans are forced by the larger society to remain ethnic as “Asian.” Asian Americans, regardless of diversity of country of origin, are categorized by a racial term, “Asian” (Kibria 2000). Moreover, ethnicity as Asian is regarded as foreign to Americanness, which contributes to the construction of Asian Americans as “forever foreigners” (Tuan 1998). These studies highlight how the external forces of racial categories and meanings restrict the group’s ethnic options, forcing it to remain ethnic in society.

Some studies have further examined the social processes in which Asian Americans construct their ethnicity in ongoing interactions with the larger contexts. Like other ethnics, Asian Americans maintain ethnic attachment and pride through group solidarity or shared interests (Portes and Zhou 1993). On the other hand, however, the group tends to accept the racialized conception of Asian ethnicity (Pyke 2000; Pyke and Dang 2003; Osajima 1993). Although the model minority stereotype praises Asian culture and norms for their “pro-work, pro-education, pro-merit values” (Harrison 1992), at the same time, Asianness in the American context is closely associated with inferiority and deviancy when compared to Americanness (Lee 1999). Later-generation Asian Americans are likely to internalize the ideological conception of Asianness in relation to family (Pyke 2000), co-ethnic relations (Pyke and Dang 2003), and romantic relations (Pyke and Johnson 2003). The literature suggests the *ambivalent* characteristics of ethnic identity including both pride and self-blaming among Asian American youths.

This contradictory identity formation, termed as “re-ethnicization” in this study, is still understudied. Further research is needed to examine how Asian American youths construct the ambivalent ethnic identity in various domains, for instance, in workplaces or in school. In a study on Korean and Indian young professionals, Dhingra (2007) illustrates that his subjects tend to perform the racialized image of Asians in workplace to benefit from the positive aspect of Asian stereotypes. This cultural practice, however, contributes to the reproduction of the Asian stereotypes and Asians’ subordination.

In short, the Asian ethnicity argument stresses the stable trait of ethnicity and its positive effect on social adaptation. By contrast, the racialized ethnicity argument highlights the ongoing impact of race on ethnic identities. According to this perspective, Asian American youths are likely to have different conceptions of ethnicity from Asian immigrants, conceptions that contain both ethnic pride and self-blaming.

## ***2.5. Analyzing Children of Korean Immigrants: Conclusion***

In the above sections, I examined the competing perspectives of social incorporation and identity formations among children of Asian immigrants. I focus my review on the distinction between the binary and triracial views of race relations and on which perspective provides a better understanding of lived experiences of Asian immigrant children. In this section, I briefly discuss what findings are expected from the aforementioned theoretical reviews.

First, I expect that *Korean immigrant families' class backgrounds moderate the impact of ethnic values and networks on parental expectations for children's mobility*. According to the whitening argument, the influence of ethnic values and resources often outweighs the economic and social marginality, leading the group to achieve assimilation over generations. The marginality argument, however, stresses the impact of ascribed status including race and class, on parenting practices, trivializing the dynamics of ethnic influences. The reviews of these perspectives suggest that the impact of ethnic resources and racial marginality on parental expectations differs by family class backgrounds. Korean parents from the middle class are likely to benefit from ethnic influences and equate class elevation with whitening, leading to high expectations. By contrast, those from lower-class families are likely to be isolated from ethnic influences, leading to lower expectations.

Second, I expect that *community contexts differentiate the influence of race on perceived race relations and social incorporation*. The ethnic community model, following the assimilation perspective, stresses its role in insulating community members from the larger society's racial categorization and the homogeneity of community experiences of Asian Americans. The collective minority perspective, by contrast, highlights the outweighing impact of social categorization over the ethnic community. Existing empirical studies, however, have shown that multiple factors in community including neighborhood, school setting, and peer interactions, shape minority individuals'

perceptions of race relations, as well as social incorporation. I also expect that the community contexts where my Korean informants are situated are diverse in character and function to diversify the incorporation experiences of Korean immigrant children.

Third, I predict that *occupational standings differentiate the mode of social incorporation among grown children of Korean immigrants*. The assimilation perspective relates socioeconomic mobility to the degree of assimilation, claiming that Asian American youths are approaching full integration into the white mainstream. The collective minority perspective dissociates socioeconomic incorporation from sociocultural integration, highlighting ongoing social exclusion of Asian Americans as “unassimilable” foreigners. My review of the literature suggests the adaptational experiences of Asian Americans are not just homogeneous but diversified by which occupations they hold, which correspond with the triracial perspective. The racialized societal expectation for Asians as only technically skilled is expected to diversify the modes of incorporation in the labor market.

Finally, I expect that *Korean immigrant children’s racial identities differ by several factors, including occupation and gender, but reflect their intermediate position in the American racial hierarchy*. The whitening perspective highlights Asian Americans’ socioeconomic indexes, which are approaching those of whites, arguing for the group’s closer identity with the white mainstream. The collective minority argument emphasizes the group’s proximity to other people of color in terms of racism and discrimination. The triracial

perspective suggests that economically advancing but socially excluded, Asian Americans deny they are an “oppressed” minority and, at the same time, endorse being non-white. It further suggests that some segments of the groups have benefited from the relaxation of racial distinction and economic advancement, achieving near-white status. My research also predicts that Korean immigrant children show diversified racial identifications, from white-like to black-like identities, while many have an ambivalent identity as neither white nor black.

## **3. Race, Class, and Parental Expectations**

### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine how Korean immigrant parents' sociocultural marginality and class background interact with each other to shape parental expectations for children's success. By focusing my analysis on three distinctive but related aspects of parental expectations, career development, racial socialization, and the community influence, I show that the Korean immigrant families' class backgrounds are responsible for the level of parental expectations for children's success, and that their perceived marginality matters more for those from middle-class backgrounds. I utilize a grounded theory analysis to investigate my respondents' retrospective narratives on parental expectations. I divide my sample into two subgroups for comparison based on their parents' level of education as a proxy for class status. The families from middle-class backgrounds (61 respondents) are categorized as those whose fathers completed college (at least) in Korea, while the lower class group's fathers may have graduated from high school in Korea (8). In this chapter, I specifically seek to answer the following questions: How do Korean immigrant parents' class backgrounds differentiate parental expectations for children's success? How does their perceived marginality shape childrearing practices on child development and racial socialization? How is the effect of the parents' class background on parental expectations moderated by the families' relationship with the ethnic community?

In this chapter, I argue that parents' class backgrounds predict a huge difference in parental expectations for children's success. "Preoccupation with a mobility outcome" characterizes parental expectations among the Korean families from middle-class backgrounds. The imbalance between high educational and financial resources and socioeconomic marginality is responsible for their distinct expectations. They often rely on an abstract, rather than practical, conception of career development and racial inequality when socializing children to focus on success. The parents' prioritization of children's mobility outcomes is facilitated by the competitive comparison within the Korean ethnic community. By contrast, the Korean immigrant families from lower-class backgrounds are characterized by lower expectations for children. They allow their children to decide on their own career development, while emphasizing the importance of education. The parents' weak connection with the ethnic community prevents the families from accessing educational resources and shared norms from the Korean immigrant community. My findings suggest that rather than the popular image of Asian immigrant families emphasizing the role of Asian culture in children's socialization, class backgrounds and sociocultural marginality complicate the socialization processes of Korean immigrant children.

## **3.2. Korean Immigrant Families from Middle-Class Backgrounds**

### **3.2.1. “Doing Better, Doing Better, but Never Being Told How”: Abstract Expectations for Success**

The literature on children of racially and economically disadvantaged groups points out a huge disparity between parents’ expectations and their actual “cultivation” (Lareau 2011; Beasley 2011). Although parents have high expectations for children, the parents of disadvantaged social groups have difficulty in carefully providing children with practical guides and advice for mobility. Since they have few experiences in educational and occupational institutions and little access to mainstream institutions, these parents have little practical knowledge with which to guide their children to get ahead in each step of social mobility (Stanton-Salazar 1997). The parental expectations for these groups are likely no more than “abstract recommendations” (Beasley 2011).

Korean immigrant parents from middle-class backgrounds share some aspects with other disadvantaged groups but have distinct characteristics in childrearing. Although the Korean immigrants are socially and culturally marginalized from the mainstream, they are highly educated, relatively well-off, and have strong work ethics (Yoon 1997). These alternative resources allow middle-class parents to transmit better advantages to children. Respondents attest that parents heavily invested in their children’s education, even when the family economy was in trouble (Sun 1998). Their



parents paid to enroll children in schools, extracurricular activities, Hagwons<sup>3</sup>, and even colleges. The parents also carefully regulated children's behaviors and schedules, specifically regarding schooling, in some cases with an authoritarian approach to childrearing (Steinberg et al. 1992). According to respondents, however, there is a gap between parents' expectation and their actual parenting practices. Respondents' parents are rarely involved in nurturing children's interests and talents in relation to their expected career, for instance frequently communicating with educational institutions and providing practical guides and comments in college application and career decision-making. Since the parents are not able to supplement social and cultural marginality fully with alternative resources, the gap in childrearing leads them to stress "a goal to meet" rather than "how to get there" in educational and career development.

My respondents state that their parents stress education and/or specific professional careers (such as doctor or lawyer), in many cases regardless of children's interests and willingness. Eugene provides a typical example. He is 45 and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 8. Eugene's father was "very rich" in Korea but worked as a manager in a bus company after immigration. His father's expectations were similar to other Korean immigrants from middle-class backgrounds in Korea, except for his additional preference for a military career. Eugene describes,

---

<sup>3</sup> Private educational institutions in the Korean American communities (see, Min and Kim 2006)

*He didn't give us any guidance. I would say he gave us a goal to meet. As to how to get there? He didn't know. He didn't tell us. He said, "Okay. I want you to be a U.S. Army officer." How do you get there? He doesn't know. But that's what he preached to me ever since I was a kid. And then uh, as a professional, become a, you know, doctor or a lawyer. I guess his guidance was that, you know, there is really, as a Korean-American here, you really don't have any say-so in what you're doing, any control, unless you are in a professional environment such as being a doctor or lawyer. So I guess that was his rationale for it, but he didn't give us really any guidance in how to become one except just education. [emphasis added]*

Eugene's father was working for the U.S. government in Korea, which was a middle-class job during the 1950s, just after the Korean War. This position allowed Eugene's family to immigrate with few limitations and settle in America with ease. The family's middle-class background led Eugene's parents to have high expectations for their children. However, they had little knowledge about "professional" careers in the U.S. or in Korea, where the labor market before the family migrated had suffered a lack of demand for white-collar workers (Yoon 1997). Another informant, Yoon, a 44-year-old male born in the U.S., also recalls,

*There was an expectation of achievement of being the hardest worker possible, always. Education, doing better, doing better, doing better, doing better, but never being told how. It was never, "This is how," it was always just expectation. Never an explanation of, "What tools do you need?" "How can I help you?" So there was this bar, they just sort of set it, and then they'd walk way and say, "Meet that." You know, if you had drowning in the water, I don't know what to do. But again, just, my friends all had the same experience. [emphasis added]*

Korean immigrant parents' emphasis on mobility outcomes is partly shaped by their immigrant status. Overrepresented in the small business sector, Korean immigrants often suffer from extremely long working hours and economic insecurity (Yoon 1997); spouses are in many cases mobilized in the family business to minimize personnel expenses (Espiritu 2008). Recollecting their childhood, some informants called themselves "latchkey kids" (Min 1998); they had to be home alone and had few chances to spend time with their parents. Their parents worked late in the evening, and even on weekends. The absence of intergenerational communication in childhood contributes to the abstract nature of my informants' perceived parental expectations. Asian culture, stressing strict hierarchy in family, further facilitates this practice (Pyke 2000). More important, Korean immigrants' poor English fluency, lack of American educational and occupational experiences, and a shortage of social and cultural capital, help shape their superficial career and educational expectations.

Korean immigrant parents' abstract expectations are also reflected in their preference for "top schools." According to respondents, their parents push them to enter a handful of renowned colleges, such as Yale, Harvard, and Stanford, regardless of children's interests. They prefer these colleges for their children not only because they consider them the best option for children's career development, but also because they know little about the American educational system. According to my informants, their parents obtained information about colleges mainly from their co-ethnic friends and

ethnic newspapers: the colleges that the Korean community considers “the best” become the best for them (Kim 1993). Nonetheless, parents from middle-class backgrounds have relatively abundant economic resources compared to those from the lower class, which allows them to enroll their children in those top schools. Paul, a 28-year-old, is a native-born male. His father graduated from college in Korea. After immigration, he has run several different small businesses in California. Paul makes a statement about his parents’ knowledge of the American education system.

I highly, highly doubt that any Korean parent who encourages their kid to go to Harvard knows anything about Harvard. You know what I mean? I doubt that they can tell you anything about the campus, about [clears his throat] you know, how are the classes, how are the professors, are there more research professors than there are teaching professors. I doubt that any of them could tell you any detail about Harvard, Stanford, Yale, or Berkeley. Umm [clears his throat], for them it’s more of *a brand name*, in my opinion. That’s how I feel. [emphasis added]

Paul’s parents, like other Korean immigrants, encouraged Taehan to go to one of several top schools. According to Paul, the parents came to know these school names from co-ethnics and ethnic newspapers. Due to their long working hours and lack of English fluency, the parents did not often participate in a variety of activities in school, which blocked them from access to information. For them, the name of famous colleges became the only standard for the children’s educational success.

Although their Korean parents often socialize children to pursue professional occupations, such as medical or legal fields, informants recall that parents had not

provided them with any information about those jobs or any access to people in those occupations. Small business owners predominantly occupy the Korean American community where parents have less access to workers in mainstream fields. Of course, a fraction of Korean immigrants immigrated as professional workers, mainly from medical or technical fields (Yoon 1997). This limited pool of professional networks partly explains Korean immigrants' relatively free access to the information about these occupations. Nonetheless, children suffer from limited options and information provided by the family and the community. Some respondents recalled that they often experienced conflicts with their parents about their choices of majors and colleges (Min 1998).

In short, the imbalance between relatively rich educational resources and sociocultural marginality results in abstract expectations for children's success among parents from middle-class backgrounds. These expectations, in many cases, do not go hand in hand with the parents' careful cultivation of childrens' talent and interests, which contrast with middle-class American families (Lareau 2002).

### **3.2.2. “Because We’re Different We Have to Do More”: Racial Inequality and Class Mobility**

Racial and ethnic minority parents provide children with a variety of values, norms, and knowledge about race and ethnicity during childrearing, for their developmental and psychological well-being as a minority in society (for a review, see

Hughes et al. 2006). These parents socialize children to take pride in their race and ethnicity and/or prepare for potential prejudices and discrimination in society.

Researchers agree that this racial/ethnic socialization is crucial for minority children to promote self-esteem, cope with racism and discrimination, and maintain psychological wellbeing (Scott 2003; Chávez and French 2007).

Asian-origin parents also transmit to children their cultural heritage, ethnic language, and cultural values to promote ethnic pride (Ou and McAdoo 1993). Nonetheless, they are less likely to share practical lessons about prejudices and discrimination with children (Nagata 1993; Chen 1998). My respondents describe similar experiences. About 40% of respondents state that their parents have not talked about *any* race-related issues, while others had been taught about ethnic heritage and pride. Moreover, among those who heard race-related lessons from parents, almost half attest that their parents mainly described anti-Black attitudes and perspectives (Kim 2008b). Most of my respondents, thus, have received no practical guidance about prejudice or discrimination they might suffer from their parents. East Asian culture, stressing conformity to authority, might be one explanation of the socialization pattern (Nagata 1993; Kim 2011). In addition, Korean immigrant parents are not aware of what racism and discrimination mean and what it means to be a minority in American society. As first-generation immigrants, they have few experiences and little information about race relations in the U.S. and the importance of preparing their children for it. This cultural

deficiency leads to insufficient racial socialization practices among respondents' parents.

Sue, a 26-year-old woman who was native-born, describes:

I think I was really naïve when I was growing up. I don't, like even when I was picked on for being Asian I don't think I really understood. And my parents didn't really prepare me for that either. I think because, like thinking back on it now, like they experienced so many racial encounters when they first moved to the U.S. I mean I think like, I think my mom probably got harassed a lot more than she remembers just because she couldn't speak English. But then like, I think they're just like trying to survive and do things for their family so it wasn't like they shared any of that with us or really prepared me for any of that. So I think I was kind of sheltered in that way.

Sue's father was running his own company after changing jobs several times after immigration. His business was quite successful so Sue's family did not suffer any economic instability. Despite this class status, her family had been discriminated from parents because of race. However, her parents never prepared her for racism because of their lack of knowledge and their busy schedule.

The most common theme in racial socialization among Korean parents from middle-class backgrounds was that they emphasized American meritocracy as a way to overcome racial inequality. My respondents attest that their parents stress American meritocracy while deemphasizing racism and discrimination that children might face. Asian immigrant parents have a racialized notion of career mobility, an idea that prioritizes mobility through education as the only way to overcome racial inequality (Sue and Okazaki 1990; Xie and Goyette 2003). Similarly, respondents' parents chose to

teach children this egalitarian idea of meritocracy, rather than prepare them for potential discrimination and racism. Mark, a second son whose father ran an auto repair shop and whose mother was a hairdresser, was taught repeatedly that education is the only way to succeed. Mark recalls,

They [my parents] said “as far as because *we are a foreigner to this country*, if a Caucasian person had this grade and a Korean person, Korean child, had this grade, the other person would be up just because *you were a minority*. So in order to be equal, you had to do better than them, in order for you to succeed. Even when you got older and you worked for a company and you had the same credentials, they are going to pick the other guy just because *we are the minority*.” Just because there isn’t supposed to be prejudice, there is in the eyes of society. So that is how they taught us the importance of education, that you had to do better than other people. [emphasis added]

As college graduates, Mark’s parents always emphasized education as a way to succeed. Mark’s parents were well aware that there is discrimination against Korean Americans (Kim 2008b). The informant’s parents have tried to teach the child about this social reality. On the other hand, however, his parents firmly believe that higher education is the only springboard to overcome racial inequality in society: their children should have higher aspirations and achievements than their white counterparts in order to reach parity with them. “Being a minority” or “being a foreigner” is a main theme in his parents’ encouragements to study.

This parental expectation does not vary much by gender. For example, R41, a 35-year-old native-born female, was raised in a Korean immigrant family whose father has



a Bachelor's degree in Korea but ran a dry cleaning business since he immigrated. Her father encouraged her to study hard in order to overcome a double barrier as an Asian woman.

Honestly, my dad, he probably gave me the best work ethic that I could have possibly hope[d] for. He told me very honestly when I was young, he said, "You know, you're a girl and you're Asian, *you're not white*, that means *that you have to work twice as hard, study twice as hard, and be twice as good as anyone else in order to make a difference.*" You can't be just like everyone, you have to be better, and it's gonna be harder for me because I'm a woman and because I'm Asian to make it in this world. And I think that because of that, I internalized this competitiveness. [emphasis added]

The preoccupation with education, as well as professional careers, as a strategy of racial socialization helped my respondents concentrate on education and success, rather than feel dissatisfied with their new home. Nonetheless, some respondents, like Sue, experienced psychological suffering when facing racial mistreatments growing up. Some Korean immigrant parents, according to my informants, inform their children to *ignore* any racial mistreatment that happen during their lives (Chou and Feagin 2008). Parents do not share their own discriminatory experiences with children, much less teach them how to deal with these experiences. Todd, a 41-year-old native-born male recalls, "I think they [my parents] probably encountered some kind of racism from Caucasian Americans, white Americans, so there may be some resentment there. I don't know specifics. But, you know, they would tell me 'Don't get intimidated by what you

do. Try hard, excel [in] what they [white Americans] are doing.'" In addition, Taehan, a 50-year-old man who came to the U.S. at age 6, still vividly remembers his parents' message:

They [my parents] would say, "Given that you were different, you're Korean, you're going to have to work harder to get perhaps the same opportunities that someone [who is] white may get." But it wasn't something that was always talked about or raised. You know, just once in a while, they would mention something like that and maybe....but it was more about "this is our expectation for you *not because you're going to face racial barrier[s] or racial discrimination. This is our expectation for you to be successful*, you need to study hard, do these kinds of things, have education and so on." [emphasis added]

Educational success, for parents, is understood as a "racial strategy" to overcome racial inequality (Kibria 2002). This cultural understanding of race leads parents to focus on children's academic performances, paying little attention to their social and cultural suffering as racial minorities. According to my respondents' recollection, this childrearing practice is not just a "strategic" decision from parents' careful calculation of the racial reality (Xie and Goyette 2003). It also reflects parents' social and cultural ignorance of racial inequality and preoccupation with success and status.

### **3.2.3. “My Parents’ Friends Think I’m Successful”: Ethnic Community and Status Elevation**

Similar to other Asian American communities in the U.S., the Korean American community has developed tightly knit co-ethnic networks and maintained ethnic values and norms, which facilitates not only the immigrants’ economic advancement, but also children’s adaptation and upward mobility (Portes and Zhou 1993). Even though Korean immigrants are relatively well educated and have strong work ethics, they have limited access to institutional resources, such as the American educational and occupational systems, due to poor English skills, fewer experiences in the mainstream labor market, and social segregation of the community. The tightly knit co-ethnic community network partly compensates for this deficiency in mainstream information and social capital by sharing resources with each other through means such as personal interactions and ethnic newspapers. The community, for example, has developed an “ethnic system of supplementary education,” such as ethnic-language schools and private afterschool institutions, informing parents about the American educational system, as well as facilitating young generations’ educational achievements (Zhou and Kim 2006). These ethnic institutions are likely to reinforce interactions among Korean immigrant parents and children. My respondents also recount that their parents learned about and share children’s education and career issues from co-ethnic networks.

Although the Korean American community plays a crucial role in buffering the effect of social marginality and enhancing socioeconomic advancement of Korean

Americans, it mediates the effect of marginality on Korean immigrants' childrearing practices, specifically on their expectation for children. Korean immigrants from middle-class backgrounds are likely to experience downward mobility after immigration and enter into the small business sector (Yoon 1997). They tend to project their unrealized "American Dream" onto their children's success (Louie 2004; Park 2005). They reinterpret their immigration story as a sacrifice for children's better opportunities and regard children's success as the entire family's success in the new home country (Gandara 1995). Moreover, Korean immigrants' collective conception of success, along with the community's resource sharing practices, creates a comparative culture of child expectations. According to respondents, Korean parents from middle-class backgrounds expect children to succeed not only to achieve wealth and stability but also because their success brings social prestige to their parents. Children's success, for Korean parents, means parents' social status in the community. Thus, it is not uncommon for parents to compare the progress of their own children with those of their friends. Parents' expectations often become competitive within immigrant communities. Yoon provides a typical example. He is a native-born, 44-year-old and witnesses about his parents,

They [my parents] wanted me to be a doctor and uh, ever since I was born, that was the goal. And my father admits now, not because he wanted that but because he knew that it was stable, and that was, [to] achieve, you could achieve *the right status*. And you know it's really kind of sad because back then, all of my parent's friends and my parents included, it was always about *what everyone else thought about your status* and if you would have honor and how you could make sure *that everything*

*you did was in honor of your parents.* That was, you know, it was never about what you wanted, what I wanted to do was never a question, that was never asked of me. [emphasis added]

Yoon grew up in New York with successful Korean immigrant parents. His father immigrated as a doctor. His family always wanted him to follow his father into medicine. His parents were well aware being a doctor would provide Yoon with economic stability and high social status, as well as the benefits these supply for minority children. At the same time, their son's job would affect their social status in their community. In Yoon's words, "the right status," "right" designates what the community defines as desirable occupations for immigrants' children.

Respondents also state that their academic performances and career development are often compared with the children of their parents' friends. Their parents expect them not just to do well in school and in the labor market, but to exceed the accomplishments of these rivals. Also, whether respondents are successful or not is often defined by other community members. Chong, a 27-year-old male, said, "I think a lot of Korean parents like to *compare their kids*, even though they don't want to but they, they still do. So I think, I think um, there was a lot of pressure for me *to live up to the other kids' performance and how they were doing in school.*" Another respondent, Heesu, makes a similar remark about how children's status is measured. The 32-year-old female lawyer, born in the U.S., remembers how the community reacted to her entering the law as follows: "I mean *my parent's friends think I'm successful*. I mean I don't care but you know

they're like, 'Oh you're a lawyer.' But apparently my parents feel very proud about it but I'm not."

The comparative nature of the value of children's success among Korean immigrants implies that success is measured by the criterion of the community, not by those of the mainstream. None of my respondents states that their parents have ever compared them with peers from other ethnic groups; the objects of comparison are usually Korean peers. Korean immigrant parents' comparative expectations, thus, partly reflect their social and cultural isolation from mainstream society. Additionally, the comparative aspect of parental expectations is associated with parents' narrowed preferences for children's career prospects. Parents often prefer a few kinds of occupations, including medical and legal ones, not only because they think these jobs bring high return to education and guarantee equal access to minorities, but also they think the occupations are highly recognized in the community.

Some respondents point out that comparative parental expectations have some negative consequences. Comparison with co-ethnic peers puts a lot of psychological pressure on the second generations. Given that second-generation Korean Americans are usually highly educated and overrepresented in professional occupations, my respondents may experience more stress from psychological pressure from their parents than counterparts of other ethnicities (Zhou et al. 2008). Additionally, comparative expectations of Korean immigrant parents make children's performances a criterion by

which a family is evaluated within the community. Respondents explain that Korean immigrants tend to evaluate each family by the name of their children's college and the title of their career. Heesu describes a traumatic episode in her family's history:

When I was a senior I got into [Name of College], early decision, and then all of a sudden everybody is nice to my mother, everybody's inviting us over for dinner. They want to take me out to lunch so that I can help their kids study. They want me to be this role model for their children. But up to that point we were nobody. So I just, I thought, what a, what a, you know, that's wrong. So, um, I actually didn't, I didn't, I stopped going to church for a long time after that. Because I saw that. I saw that culture and I just, I didn't realize that it wasn't, it just wasn't church, it was also the Korean immigrant mentality of trying to succeed and get out, get ahead and things, and so. But it was very clear, like *my mom went from being nobody to somebody because her daughter got into a good college*. And then people started paying attention to me when before they didn't even pay attention, you know they didn't care who I was, you know. [emphasis added]

Heesu grew up in a Korean immigrant family; his father was running his own business and her mother worked in the father's company. When she was young, her co-ethnic peers often harassed Heesu in an ethnic church because she was "chubby" and her mother did not bring her father. However, the church people's negative view of her family changed when Heesu was admitted to a "top school." Heesu's family, as well as she, achieved a high social status in the ethnic community due to her college admission.

In short, not only does the Korean ethnic community provide alternative resources and social capital to compensate for the social marginality of Korean Americans, this community helps Korean immigrant families from middle-class

backgrounds have a comparative sense of parental expectations for children. By intimately interacting with co-ethnic peers, Korean immigrants learn institutional information about American education and the job market but they have a comparative expectation based on community standards for their children. This comparison sometimes becomes a strong motive among Korean American families to push their children to achieve academically. Nonetheless, it often results in psychological suffering for those children.

### ***3.3. Korean Immigrant Families from Lower-Class Backgrounds***

Although many Koreans who immigrated to the United States before 1980 had middle-class backgrounds, a significant number had lower-class backgrounds and the portion has been increasing since the 1980s (Yoon 1997). Among 69 respondents, eight have parents from lower-class backgrounds, measured by their level of education. Expectations for children's success among parents from lower-class backgrounds belie the popular image of Asian American families where parents and children have high aspirations for upward mobility regardless of class background. Their childrearing practices rather reflect Annette Lareau's (2011) "accomplishment of natural growth," a working-class or poor parents' upbringing practice that does not provide children with guided "cultivation." Korean immigrant parents from the middle class are characterized by the imbalance of high expectations and lack of resources, creating the unique



upbringing practice of abstract expectations. Those from the lower class, by contrast, have lower expectations and deficient resources, generating a childrearing strategy similar to working-class American families.

Justine is a typical case. She is 29 years old, native-born, and grew up in a Korean immigrant family with parents who only have high-school degrees. While she does not clearly remember what her parents were doing in Korea, she attests that her father was running a small business and immigrated with the invitation of her mother's sibling. When asked about parents' expectation for her as a Korean, similar to many respondents, Justine admits her parents' emphasis on education but her parents did not have any preference for her careers.

I first, in, in [Name of City], I had always got As [laughter] and then coming to [Name of City] it was a little bit harder, so I didn't, I wasn't the same, I guess, or I didn't, I didn't do as well as I did in [Name of City]. Um, but I think, I mean, I know my mom, she never pushed me to do, like be a doctor, be a lawyer, she just, *she wanted me to figure it out on my own*. So she didn't, *I don't think she really expected me to do anything, or, my dad, I don't think he did either*. Yeah, I never heard them say like, "Oh I want you to be a doctor." They wanted me to do better in school, um, but I think that's it. [emphasis added]

Similar to the Korean immigrant families from middle-class backgrounds, those from lower-class backgrounds stress the importance of education. Justine's parents also encouraged her to study hard in school. However, her parents' guidance was limited to controlling her behaviors at home. Justine's parents paid for private tutoring and piano

lessons for her but neither lasted long. When she lost interest, her parents allowed her to quit them both. Moreover, her parents did not have any concrete expectations for her career; they let Justine make her own decisions, including her selection of college major and career choices. Sung provides a similar story. Sung is a native-born 23-year-old man who lives in New York. His father and mother graduated from high school, and then immigrated to the U.S. When asked about his parents' expectations, Sung attests,

First time I said I wanted to be a doctor they said, "No, it's too much work." But if that's what you want to do, then that's what you want to do but that's too much work so you be careful. But they never told me to be a businessman or a doctor or a lawyer. They let me do whatever I wanted. They, and that's a sense like, that leniency like, they allowed me to be very independent to do what I want to do but they made sure I did it well. You know like am I getting a 4.0, you know am I not doing drugs. You do what you want but do it well.

Having lived in a Korea Town, Sung had heard repetitively that Korean Americans prefer their children to become doctors or lawyers. When Sung expressed his dream to be a doctor, his parents discouraged him. His parents encouraged him to be "independent" in his career choices. This does not reflect a Western ideal of family where children's freedom and independence is emphasized in childrearing (Pyke 2000); rather, it reflects parents' lack of cultural competence to guide their children to have high aspirations and cultural capital (Lareau 2002). Parents' class status is mainly responsible for this childrearing practice. Korean immigrants from lower-class backgrounds had limited experiences and information about education and careers in

Korea. After immigration, they continued to work in worse labor conditions than those from middle-class backgrounds after immigration. They had fewer financial resources and limited social networks, as well as less human capital. Many respondents lived in double-income families and their parents tended to work long hours. These parents had fewer chances to utilize ethnic educational institutions and co-ethnic peers to compensate for their lack of resources (Lew 2006). For instance, Sarah, a 30-year-old native-born female, states that her parents “emphasized studying a lot but they didn’t really have the finance...the financial ability to send us to the most prestigious Hakwons.”

The relatively lower expectations among the Korean families from lower-class backgrounds are reflected in racial socialization. Parents from middle-class backgrounds often utilize a narrative of racial disadvantages for their children’s education (Kibria 2002), while those from lower-class backgrounds do not. They either gave their children no racial lessons, or only described racialized incidents from their own workplaces. This also reflects lower class parents’ lack of cultural competence to cultivate their children’s educational aspirations.

In case of Korean parents from middle-class backgrounds, their high expectations often interact with ethnic community norms to encourage children to aspire for success. They tend to have stronger and stable connections with co-ethnics because their businesses are well established in the ethnic community. As seen in the previous

section, the tightly knit immigrant community often functions to translate children's success into parents' social status. However, immigrants from lower-class backgrounds, in many cases, have a weaker connection with the ethnic community. Many of them have marginalized jobs in the community; they are less likely to participate in ethnic activities, such as ethnic churches or organizations. The community norms that value certain occupations are less likely to affect Korean families from lower-class backgrounds (Lew 2006). My respondents from lower-class families witness that their parents were influenced by co-ethnics in expressing preferences for children's education and career choices, but easily disposed these expectations if their children showed no interest. Joon is a 29-year-old, native-born man. His parents both were high-school graduates in Korea. His father runs a small business and his mother run a laundry business. When asked how he characterizes his parents, he states:

My mom, the way that she was very Korean, was she was very strict in my studies, that's more than obvious, she took me Tae Kwon Do, she did piano lessons, she uh, she kinda did everything that what my friend's parents did, like we, like it's just kind of like a template like when Korean parents come to America they're like, "This is what we want to do with out kids." I feel like she followed that template, but in the later years I failed as a typical Korean son, you know, making good grades, doing well in school and getting into an awesome university like, high standards, you know.

When he was young, Joon's mother tried to raise him by following the community expectation, as he called it a "template." However, as his family moved to a

town in a Southern state where few Asians reside and he enrolled in schools with few Asians, his parents' expectations waned. His parents also divorced. Having had no role model to follow from his family or his community, Joon was raised by his mother with less guided nurturing.

In short, Korean immigrant parents from lower-class backgrounds lack cultural resources to nurture their children's aspirations for success. Their class backgrounds in Korea often affected the family's financial situation and family structure after immigration, which further lowered their expectations for their children. Although community norms and resources helped respondents have high aspirations and access to educational information, parents' marginalized class position in the community often prevented respondents benefiting from community influences.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examine how childrearing practices among Korean immigrant families differ by their class backgrounds and how the practices are shaped by their perceived marginality. The retrospective narratives of my respondents reveal that there is significant variation in parental expectation for children's success by class backgrounds. The upbringing practices of Korean parents from middle-class backgrounds are characterized by preoccupation with a mobility outcome, due to the imbalance between relatively rich educational resources and sociocultural marginality.

First, parents socialize their children to focus on “top schools” and on being “a doctor or a lawyer,” often without “cultivating” (Lareau 2002) their children’s talents and interests. Second, the Korean parents’ preoccupation with a mobility outcome corresponds with their conception of racial inequality. Rather than preparing children for potential racism and discrimination, the respondents’ parents push children to excel in education because they regard success as the only way to overcome racial disadvantages. Third, the parents’ prioritization of children’s mobility outcomes is facilitated by the competitive comparison within the Korean ethnic community.

By contrast, Korean immigrant parents from lower-class backgrounds have lower expectations for children compared to those from the middle-class. They stress the importance of education in social mobility but their deficiency in educational capital and unstable economic situations prevent them from socializing their children to have high aspirations (Lew 2006). The parents often allow their children to determine their career development, a practice which corresponds to the practices of American working- and lower-class families (Lareau 2002). The community’s resources are not often transmitted to the children because the parents’ class background prevents their families from integrating into the community.

Unlike the existing literature emphasizing the comprehensive role of ethnic values and resources in Asian American educational expectations (Goyette and Xie 1999; Kim 1993), my findings suggest that the parents’ class backgrounds moderate the ethnic

effect (Louie 2004; Lew 2006). Although Korean immigrant families from the middle class fit with the popular image of Asian Americans, my findings further suggest their perceived marginality as immigrants and as members of a subordinate race has an impact on their childrearing practices.

In the following chapter, beyond the family boundary, I examine the childhood and adolescent experiences of my Korean American respondents, focusing on how community contexts shape their understanding of race relations and social incorporation.

## **4. Community Contexts and Divergent Paths to Incorporation**

“Wherever you go, people see you Asian and so it automatically effects all of your interactions with people.”

Nancy, Female, 37

### **4.1. Introduction**

In this chapter I examine how social contexts shape my Korean respondents’ perception of race relations and “sociocultural incorporation” (Zhou and Lee 2007). Specifically, I explore the effect of racial/ethnic composition of social environments, such as neighborhoods, schools, and peer networks, on the respondents’ perceptions of inter- and intra-racial relationships and social incorporation during childhood and adolescence. Here I will attempt to answer the following questions: How do Korean immigrant children perceive race relations in different community contexts? How do they make sense of their adaptation into their communities? How does the community context mediate the larger racial structure’s effect on the respondents’ perception of race?

Unlike the popular image of ethnic communities where immigrants and families reside, do business, and enroll in school, in spatially concentrated areas, there is significant variation in neighborhood context during childhood among my Korean respondents (Min 2006a). To capture the differential effect of racial composition of social



contexts, in this chapter I will compare two typical sub-samples as ideal types—the respondents who grew up in Asian-populated neighborhoods and schools, termed as “Korea towns,” and those from white-dominated neighborhoods and schools, termed as “non-Korea towns.” To consider multiple social contexts including neighborhoods, school settings, and peer networks, I utilize Kibria’s concept of “neighborhood social landscape,” a comprehensive social characteristic of a residential area (Kibria 2002).

The retrospective narratives of my respondents reveal that those from Non-Korea towns tend to define race relations more as “hierarchical” difference, while those from Korea towns see them more as “cultural” difference. These differential ideas on race relations contribute to marked variation in their perception of incorporation. For those from Non-Korea towns, sociocultural incorporation into the white circle is understood as “forced” but “unattainable,” while those from Korea towns see it as a matter of “culture.”

#### **4.1.1. Methodological Strategy**

The residential and neighborhood patterns of my respondents during childhood and adolescence are diverse and hard to standardize in terms of racial/ethnic and class composition. The majority of respondents are from the areas where Asian immigrants traditionally chose to reside, such as California or New York (Min 2006b). Many of them, however, grew up in middle-class suburbs around these cities that are, in many cases,

white-populated (Li 2009). In addition, respondents state that there is significant difference in racial/ethnic and class composition between residential neighborhoods and school populations. Not all of the informants who grew up in Asian-sparse regions, such as the Midwest or the South, have interacted only with whites and blacks. A few of them interacted more with co-ethnics during childhood by utilizing several ethnic institutions, including ethnic churches or parents' personal networks.

Due to these varying neighborhood patterns, this study compares sub-samples of respondents who grew up in the two typical neighborhood social landscapes. I distinguished the sub-samples by racial/ethnic composition of residential areas and friendship networks in secondary schools. I define the respondents from Korea towns as those who grew up in the Asian-populated residential locations, whose metropolitan areas have a greater-than-average Asian population, and whose friend networks at least include Asian Americans, (some were predominantly Asians). I defined the respondents from non-Korea towns as those who grew up in the locations whose metropolitan areas have a smaller-than-average Asian population, and those who state that their friend networks had no Asians. Due to a lack of related statistics, I used the 1997 statistics for states and metropolitan areas to determine the ethnic compositions of metropolitan areas, when the Asian and Pacific Islanders' population consisted of 3.7% of the entire population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998). While spatial distribution of Asian Americans has shown some change over time, they remain concentrated in several

major metropolitan areas (Min 2006b). Based on this, the 1997 census may provide a more accurate measurement of Asian presence in given neighborhoods than other ethnic groups.

Among the study's 69 respondents, 35 (about 51%) are from the typical Korea towns, while 16 (about 23%) are from the typical non-Korea towns. Most of the respondents from the Asian landscape grew up in Los Angeles, New York, and the Washington, D.C., metropolitan areas. The respondents from the American landscape grew up in diverse regions, such as Ohio, Tennessee, or North Carolina. In the next sections, I present and compare the two groups' social interactions and identity formation.

## ***4.2. Korean Americans from Non-Korea Towns***

### **4.2.1. Race Relations as Hierarchical Difference**

Research on Asian immigrant children, including Korean immigrant children, is mainly dominated by an image of them whose social lives are embedded in the ethnic communities (Alba and Nee 2003). My respondents from non-Korea towns are an exception to this popular image. Their experiences outside home during childhood and adolescence are quite different from the Korean ethnic community. They grew up in neighborhoods that have almost no Asian families and few ethnic institutions like ethnic churches, and enrolled in schools with extremely few co-ethnic students. According to

the traditional assimilation perspective, this social environment might provide them with a better chance for acculturation, leading to a full incorporation into the mainstream in their adulthood (Gordon 1964). These respondents' narratives, however, reveal that although they are highly acculturated in a sense, their perception of racial/ethnic relations is far from assimilative.

For the respondents from non-Korea towns, their understanding of race relations is closely related to their interactions with "Americans," especially white peers, and their sense of being a numeric minority. Many of the respondents from non-Korea towns grew up in white middle-class neighborhoods. Many of their parents tend to enroll their kids in a school where white students constituted the majority. In such a predominantly white neighborhood landscape, whiteness is regarded as "normal" in every aspect of social interactions among the respondents (Perry 2001). Racial "abnormality" is one major theme among respondents to define themselves and race relations during childhood. Their sense of being not normal is formed not only by the demographic scarcity of Asian Americans in their neighborhoods, but also by peer interactions and social institutions by which respondents are racialized. Esther, a 44-year-old female who immigrated at the age of four, grew up in a big city in a Southern state. Her neighborhood in childhood was predominantly white and Esther enrolled in primary and secondary schools that have a largely white student body. She still vividly remembers her early episodes that made her feel different from her peers.

This area was not very diverse, you know, when I was young and so, um, um, I remember, well one of the earliest memories I have was, um, <laughter> it's so embarrassing. Anyway, um, the teacher was taking a census of the class and she asked all the white kids to raise their hand and then she asked all the black kids to raise their hands and I raised my hand, or I stood up or whatever she asked us to do with the white kids but I didn't really know. I mean I kind of, I guess I was about six, this was in first grade so, I mean I feel like I sort of knew I wasn't the same as, you know, the white kids but I knew I wasn't, you know, one of the black kids so I didn't know. Anyway she told me to sit back down. [laughter] So anyway, but I didn't [know] what I was because you know basically like in terms of, you know, I guess the racial constructs, all I knew was white and black and so, anyway. So even then I didn't really know what I was I just didn't, cause she never said, oh you're, you know, Asian or whatever. She just told me to sit back down. [laughter]

Similar to other informants, Esther first realized she was different from others when in school. In her school where white and black students dominated, she did not belong anywhere. The teacher, in a Southern social setting, was not prepared to tell her how to categorize her race. By stating "I didn't know what I was," Esther signifies that in non-Korea towns being Korean becomes a third race that does not belong to any peer group.

According to informants, educational institutions are a double-edged sword. The racial stereotypes racializing Asian Americans as a "model minority" lead teachers to treat respondents positively in class and reward them for academic achievement (Lee 1996). Many respondents have positive memories about schools and teachers. Nonetheless, the schools, especially in the white-dominant regions, contribute to reinforcing the existing race relations. Teachers often treat Korean students as

immigrants who do not speak English well and are not aware of American culture. At the same time, teachers assume they are math and science geniuses.

The respondents from non-Korea towns appear to adapt smoothly into their schools over time, partly due to their high educational performances. However, their academic excellence does not always guarantee full incorporation into white peer groups. Although respondents made seemingly good friendships with whites, as well as other ethnic peers, they often describe psychological distance from whites. It is difficult for respondents to identify this distance, partly because explicit derogatory words and actions are prohibited as a social norm (Royster 2003). Some respondents, however, recall their experiences with nuanced peer interactions. A 49-year-old man who came to the U.S. at the age of six, Taehan was raised in a white neighborhood in a Southern state. From his early years, Taehan made friends with white kids in her neighborhood and had hung out with mostly white peers until he enrolled in college. Despite his seeming white acculturation, he always felt different.

Interviewer: I: Did you feel you fit in to the peer group (in junior high and high schools)?

Taehan: Did I fit in.... Yes and no. Uh...yes in the sense that, you know, all of my friends were mostly white. And I hung out with them, I played with them, and so on, so I sort of felt like I fit in. But no, in the sense that *I always knew that I am the only one that is different from everyone else*. So even though I am playing with them or whatever, there will be some situations that would come up that it was very clear to me that I am different from even the white kids that I am hanging out with. I am a little different. So for example, I would go to a party, right? Especially in high school, I would go to a party and if I would walk in and there were some new

people that didn't know me, everyone would start looking at me because I am different. That was always there. I mean, my immediate friends may know me, but if I went to a party where there was some private school kids and public school, or if there were kids from other county at the party, as soon as I walk in, everybody would look at me because I am different. They would say, "Who's that, who's that?" So that's why I am saying yes and no. [emphasis added]

Taehan's response of "yes and no" illustrates his ambivalent attitude toward peer incorporation. On the one hand, he was incorporated into white peer groups regarding through social gatherings, shared activities, and informal interactions. His academic performance also helped him "fit in" the group. On the other hand, however, ongoing interactions with whites did not erase his being "different." He could not blend in at the party because of his skin color. Although he did not hear any derogatory words or suffer violence, the white peers' gaze represents social distance between Taehan and the party's dominant whiteness.

Informants' perception of race relations reflects the context of non-Korea towns where whiteness becomes a norm. In this social context, my respondents' sense of ethnicity is quite different from those in Asian-populated regions where Asian ethnic culture and values are familiar even among the non-Asian residents. My respondents from non-Korea towns typically see their ethnic culture and values as deviant and not normal, rather than a distinctive way of life. Their sense that distinctive cultural practices are deviant combines with the sense that of being physically different. Joe, a 41-

year-old male who immigrated at the age of 2, grew up in a Midwest state with his parents and three siblings. He makes a statement about his culture when in school years.

The thing is, I hated my, it's very interesting you say that how did I deal. I hated being Asian. Um, when my mom would turn on Korean music, I'm like, "I don't wanna hear this." Um, even um, my, I had a dislike for, you know, uh, not Korean food. I loved Korean food but I just, it was like, when, you know, when we have people over or friends over, I was like, mom, don't cook, you know, the Doenjang stew [in Korean], or don't cook of anything that's like, smelly ones [in Korean], you know, I was a little ashamed. You know, it wasn't until I got to um, you know, college that my perspective changed.

During his school years when his interactions were predominantly with white and black peers, Joe denigrated his cultural heritage because he "hated being Asian." He hated his mother cooking Korean food when his friends visited him at home, which reminded his friends he was different. For him, Korean food is a symbol that designates his abnormality within Non-Korea towns. Joe's self-deprecation ended when enrolled in college, where he started spending time with Asian peers. This suggests the influence of context on his understanding of his ethnicity.

Unlike those who were raised in Korea towns, the respondents from non-Korea towns are more likely to be exposed to harsh forms of racism and discrimination. According to respondents, the racism and discrimination that they faced in their childhoods are committed not only by whites, but also African Americans and, in a few cases, Latinos. Their numeric scarcity contributes to them being a target for incidents of



racial bias from all other races. These traumatic racial experiences reinforce their perception of race relations based on a hierarchical sense. As I describe in the next section, many respondents ended up integrating into white peers in hopes of assimilating. Others, by contrast, choose to spend time with other minority or lower-class peers, due to white racism. They tend to develop their race perception in terms of a relation of power. Growing up in a Southern state, Grace hung out with African American peers during her secondary school period. When asked what made her befriend black peers, she states,

*I just enjoyed their [African American peers'] culture, that and I think part of it was probably, you know I faced a lot of racism growing up in [Name of City]. A lot of it. I faced a lot of racism growing up in [Name of City], and it was predominantly by white people. Like, you know, like I don't, that might have been a reason why. Um, they were just, I mean they're funny. Like you know, I don't know, I think they're very funny, I think they're very blunt. Um, I find like, enjoyment in their comedic humor, like I think they're really funny. Um, and they're very expressive, I'm very, I'm a person very much for the underdog, for their society or gangs or whatever it is and I think at that point I saw ethnic people as underdog, and I enjoyed being a part of that. Because I definitely was and it's not like when I was in [Name of School], um, it's like very hard to be accepted by Caucasians in that situation. Especially coming from a social group where I hung with predominantly African-Americans, like it's really hard to be accepted by white people. [emphasis added]*

Grace had experienced “a lot of racism” from white people in and out of school. The context of non-Korea towns where racial minorities are considered “underdogs” contributed to developing her friendship with black peers. Grace’s friendship with non-white peers has repercussions in non-Korea towns; it further prevented her from

hanging out with white peers. Grace's statement suggests a social dilemma that my respondents from non-Korea towns usually face. If they do not assimilate into white peer groups, they will be regarded as similar to blacks. Thus, it is not surprising that many of my respondents chose to maintain their friendships with whites and dissociate with blacks.

Many informants from non-Korea towns started developing co-ethnic friendship mainly during college; others hung out with co-ethnic peers since childhood. Similar to the respondents from Korea towns, the respondents from non-Korea towns regard co-ethnic homophily as natural and taken-for-granted. However, there is a difference in their understanding of co-ethnic relationships. The informants from non-Korea towns tend to understand their co-ethnic friendships as providing a sense of "belonging," while those from Korea towns say it provides a sense of cultural similarity, which I describe in a later section. Respondents feel comfortable with co-ethnics because they do not have to worry about being different. Recalling her experiences during college, Esther says that co-ethnic friendship made her less "self-conscious" about being Korean.

That [college] was a really good experience for me in terms of, um, you know being around a lot more diverse, um, community. And um, I mean I think I still had some of that residual feeling very self-conscious about it, but I definitely feel like I had more Asian friends in college. You know I like started to feel more comfortable about being Korean [laughter]. Um, so that was a really good experience. I would have to say, and um, you know I don't think I'd ever even really, I mean it sounds so awful to say that, oh, you know, like you're ashamed of being Asian. But I think if, um, you know the other, like when I was really little like the other kids would

make fun of me and so, *I think that's kind of, it did always seem like you weren't, you just weren't as good you know on some level.* But then you know once I hit college I think I started, I feel like I was definitely less self-conscious about being Asian, so I think that was a good experience. Just being exposed to more people, you know.  
[emphasis added]

Esther witnesses that in non-Korea towns, being Asian does not mean equal to whiteness. It made her ashamed of being Asian, growing up. Her encounter with a sizable number of Asian students in college led Esther to overcome her self-consciousness. This suggests that her seeming integration into the white circle during adolescence did not guarantee her full incorporation. By contrast, her engagement with Asian peers led her to have an equal membership with her peers, which provided her with a sense of belonging.

In short, my respondents from non-Korea towns perceive race relations mainly in terms of a racial hierarchy and regard whiteness as normal. My respondents, as a numerical racial minority, see their skin color and cultural heritages as not normal and deviant. Although this perception of race is not uncommon among other racial minority groups, my respondents tend to develop a unique sense of assimilation based on their perceived race relations, which I examine in the following section.

#### **4.2.2. "I Wanted to Fit-In!": The Dilemma of Assimilation**

Thanks to their middle-class family status and high educational aspirations, my respondents from non-Korea towns had often been successfully incorporated into white

peers and schools over time. Studies suggest that association with the mainstream race, as well as educational advancement, facilitates assimilation, in other words, full incorporation into the mainstream (Bankston Iii and Zhou 1997; Berry 2006). According to respondents, however, their acculturation in terms of friendship and education does not lead to “social” incorporation into the privileged race. While recalling their school years, respondents often state, “I wanted to fit in.” By this sentence, they signify that that they were not able to fully become “white.” Due to their sense of race based on unchangeable skin color, as seen in the prior section, respondents conceive of assimilation as an unachievable project.

According to some of the respondents from non-Korea towns, the “relative valorization” of Asian Americans compared to African Americans and their better academic performances help them incorporate into white peers and schools (Kim 1999). Jun, a 50-year-old male who immigrated at the age of 10, is a typical example. He grew up in a Midwest state with his father who practiced medicine. Although he enrolled in the schools where he and his siblings were the only Asian students, he recalled that he could easily fit in to the schools.

I had a lot of advantage academically because my sister and my brother preceded me in my high school, and they were all straight A students. So when I got there, they assumed that I was a good student. I remember a teacher gave me an A, you know he said, “you don’t have to take the final I know you’re going to get an A anyway.” That would never happen to an American student, a white student, never. Even if his brothers had good grades, that would never happen. I’m

convinced that because, you know, because my sister and my brother, I think being Asian and there's a positive predisposition regarding academics and Asians, they actually, he actually, one of my teachers told me, you don't have to take the final, I'm going to just give you an A. I mean that's just remarkable. Ok. At the time, I was 17 years old, I'm thinking, ok I just get to goof off, but when I look back on it I'm like, wow, that's pretty remarkable. So, yeah, *most of my experiences were on the whole a lot more positive than negative*. And the negatives were, you know just, I remember like in college you know you go out someplace and somebody, you know some guy yells a racial epithet, you know calling you a chink or whatever, and that that would happen, not frequently but not infrequently either. It would happen enough where it would sort of get you upset. But then, you know, it's always, you know, if I was a white guy wearing a certain hat and the guy didn't like the hat he'd yell, Hey, you, something else, right. No matter what you live, no matter who you are somebody's going to yell something unpleasant to you. That's just life. [emphasis added]

According to Jun, Korean Americans' excellent academic performances and the stereotype of Asians as a model minority, specifically from the teachers, helped him integrate into the school (Lee 1996). He witnesses that being Korean is an advantage in American society and, in some cases, means being treated better than whites are. His assertion, however, ignores that he was evaluated by his ethnicity, not by his individual talent and ability. The teachers participated in reproducing the Asian stereotype, rather than treating him as equal to whites. In the later part, Jun acknowledges that this formal integration is just one aspect of integration. As a non-white, he is destined to face unequal treatment in his social life. Jun, however, sticks to the "positive" side of his experiences, trying to stress his full integration.

This seeming incorporation does not guarantee sociocultural integration into the white circle. Although the respondents often claim that they "fit in" at the schools and

among white peers, they at the same time acknowledge that the integration is an “approximation” (Bow 2010). Esther, who always hung out with white peers during secondary schools, repetitively recalled that she “always wanted to fit in.”

I definitely always felt different. You know, and um, I did always want to fit in [laughter]. They [Americans] didn't have that same, I think, anxiety, I think about trying to fit in to like the majority established culture like there's a, there's like um, there's always like the sense of like is this, “Am I doing this right? Is this what, you know, is normal?” I always wanted to be normal, and um, I don't think they had that same concern. Like I'm just assuming. But then you know honestly if you talk to people everybody has anxieties about something, so, if it wasn't that it would have been something else I'm sure. So I don't know.

According to Esther, full incorporation into white peer groups requires acculturation in white culture, or the “majority established culture.” In a white-dominated world such as where Esther was embedded, white culture is regarded as a taken-for-granted norm and value (Frankenberg 1993). Esther's endless anxiety of fitting in further suggests that acculturation is just a sufficient condition for assimilation. Esther's contrast of herself with the “Americans” suggests that her non-whiteness is another barrier to being assimilated into the white circle. Respondents' constant desire for assimilation, and their endless fear of not fitting in, is caused by their unchangeable physical difference. Similarly, Taehan makes a statement:

As I grew up, I was different from everyone. So I always had this sort of complex. And it is still true today. I sort of just want to fit it. I don't want to stand out. Because whenever I was young, I was always different and I always stood out. I

never really blended in with the environment because I was the only one. I think that has had an impact on my sort of personality. I never want to stand out. I just want to sort of fit in with the surroundings and the environment.

As the only Asian in school, Taehan wanted to be accepted by the majority. His desire for assimilation is not just limited to his past but is currently haunting him. Similar to Esther, the incorporation into the white circle for Taehan is an ongoing life task. Taehan acknowledges that his appearance as a non-white became a hindrance for him to “blend in” with the mainstream. Rather than being proud of being Asian, he chose to uphold white supremacy. During his school years, assimilation for him became social process that forced him to acknowledge the inferiority of his race and ethnicity and only allowed him to approximate, not equal, the white circle.

Similar to Taehan, the respondents from non-Korea towns often were reluctant to hang out with co-ethnic peers partly because of their fear of being labeled as Asian. Esther states, “I never even really wanted to hang out with the other Asian kids that much because I just did not want to draw attention to, you know, that fact that I was. Isn’t that ridiculous? I know.” Similarly, Nancy, a 37-year-old woman who is native-born, grew up in a Midwest state where she and her family experienced ongoing racism and discrimination in public places, as well as in schools. This harshly racist environment led her to consider fitting-in with the community as not standing out. Nancy states, “Asians there were very forced to integrate, assimilate, compared to here [Virginia] whereas they kind of have their own community.”

According to the respondents from non-Korea towns, on the one hand, Korean immigrant children are perceived as more assimilable to the mainstream peer group compared to other racial groups, especially African Americans. On the other hand, their seeming incorporation into the privileged group does not guarantee full acceptance. In spite of their struggles for assimilation, respondents implicitly acknowledge that they are not able to fit in fully with white peers because of their racial and cultural differences. The Korean immigrant children's desire for assimilation, and their fear of exclusion, often leads them to stigmatize their race.

### ***4.3. Korean Americans from Korea Towns***

#### **4.3.1. Race Relations as Cultural Difference**

Unlike the respondents from non-Korea towns, the Korean American respondents from Korea towns correspond to the typical scholarly image of those whose social interactions are deeply embedded in their ethnic community (Portes and Zhou 1993). Outside of their homes, these respondents maintained a close connection to local ethnic churches, ethnic educational institutions, and peer networks (Min 1992; Zhou and Kim 2006). The relative visibility of Korean Americans, as well as Asian Americans, in neighborhoods and the shared strong ethnic norms and values insulate them from the physical and psychological impact of racism and discrimination from society (Operario and Fiske 2001). Respondents develop a distinctive idea of inter- and intra-racial



relations. Interviews with respondents from Korea towns reveal that cultural commonality and differences are a main theme by which respondents conceive race, specifically during childhood and adolescence.

During childhood, respondents from Korea towns tend to interact more with co-ethnic peers than others. Co-ethnic peers are connected to each other through their parents, churches, and schools. Respondents developed their relationship with co-ethnics within and outside their schools. In such environments where racial conflicts matter relatively little, respondents tend to define their close relationship with co-ethnics more as cultural “commonality” than in terms of hierarchical differences. They are likely to regard their gravitation towards co-ethnic peers as “natural” and cultural. In addition to common language, cultural values, and the same way of life, informants witness that the similar experiences of immigrants’ families create a cultural bond that connects co-ethnic peers. A 41-year-old who was native born, Todd grew up in Los Angeles, where the Asian population is concentrated. His childhood neighborhood, as well as his secondary school settings, was racially diverse, including a significant proportion of Korean Americans. When asked about friendship with co-ethnics, Todd states,

There were certain *natural connections* like food. Or the way we grew up or language or you know.... We all went...you know...they grew up going to Korean church and I grew up going to Korean church so we kind of understood the culture. Our parents...you know...yeah so it was kind of additional linkages and so...and I did have some Korean-American friends that were closer. So I think there were *cultural linkages* that...that made us...better relationships, I guess. But uh...[pause] yeah, so I

had more common with them but in terms of kind of...having...as a high school student...having...friendship, close friendships, I mean close as having fun memories. [emphasis added]

As a child of Korean immigrants, Todd shares a variety of social and cultural aspects with his co-ethnic peers, which he believes bond him to these others. Language and culture are just one commonality Todd has with his friends. Their similar upbringing, the connection among their parents, and shared social activities, contributes to their co-ethnic friendship. Todd did not bring up any racial issues relative to co-ethnic friendship, which reflects the community context where racism does not matter much. It seems natural for Todd to define his co-ethnic friendship with cultural and “natural” meanings.

Respondents witness that in school peers tend to segregate by race and ethnicity (Kao and Joyner 2004). Unlike non-Korea towns where the respondents acknowledge the social and cultural dominance of whiteness in school and neighborhood, respondents from Korea towns tend to see racial homophily in friendship as more natural and attribute it to cultural differences (McPherson et al. 2001). Catherine, a native-born, 32-year-old Korean American woman, grew up in New York, one of the traditional Korea towns. She has maintained a strong friendship with co-ethnics, sometimes with other Asian Americans, since secondary schools. When asked of what made her attach to co-ethnic peers rather than peers of other races, Catherine states that it happened naturally.

I have no idea. [pause] I think initially it is the fascination that there is so many of the same kind in one place that you end up being open to each other rather than to other people. Like um, in high school, we had nine different classes and in each class you meet a different group of students. So, I found that the Korean kids would talk to each other first. And then if you see them again or you happen to be at their same lunch, it's something kind of comfortable and convenient that you already know someone, then you share their locker. It's just, you know...something...and "Oh, you ride the same train. Okay, let's just..." And you unknowingly exclude someone else in your class and you happen to see them again, then you just don't see them. Because I wouldn't say we were a minority, if anything, Asians were a majority. [laugh]

The numeric prevalence of Asians in her neighborhood and school helped Catherine gravitate towards co-ethnic peers. In such an environment, being Asian did not negatively affect her social life. Although Catherine acknowledges that there is segregation by race in friendship in her school, she understands it as a matter of "comfortable" and "convenient." As Catherine implies, such a perception of "self-segregation" (Abelmann 2009) is associated with the context where Asians are disproportionately represented.

The respondents' perception of co-ethnic homophily based on cultural commonality is equivalent to their perception of interracial relationship. Although the respondents from non-Korea towns experience interracial interactions primarily in terms of hierarchical difference, those from Korea towns tend to see race with a cultural lens (Lee 1996). Regardless of their neighborhood backgrounds, respondents tend to maintain their friendship mainly with co-ethnics, as well as Asian-origin people over time, especially since college (Kibria 2002). Many respondents from Korea towns witness

that they often “felt uncomfortable” with non-Asian ethnic peers, especially with whites, even if they maintained relationships with them. Also, they attribute the experienced interracial distance to cultural differences. A 46-year-old man who immigrated at the age of 8, Mark grew up in a Korea Town in Northern Virginia. Since this Korea Town has developed quite recently, it was not until his high school period that Mark began to develop friendships with co-ethnics in school. When asked about the difference in friendships with co-ethnics and whites, Mark states,

I think the difference is how we were brought up. Um, we came here from Korea and we have the thought of that we have to excel here and um, that we need to uh, you know uphold our culture and I guess that is it. I am not doing very well in expressing what those differences are. But it is just something you feel with a certain group of people. You feel at home, you feel at ease, and I never really felt that way when I was with white people. You really don't feel like you can let yourself go or you can open up to them you know. Because of some things like culture differences, they wouldn't understand if you tell them, they won't know what you are saying. You know how we have things like respecting your elders, and talking to them, they don't understand that, you know. They call other people like You, we would never do that. We would never go to grandma [in Korean] and say You [in Korean]. That kind of thing, you know. I think the subtle differences, the lots of subtle differences make up the big picture.

Mark plainly explains how different his culture is from that of white peers, which he believes is a main cause of social segregation. He witnesses that he did not feel comfortable with white peers because they did not “understand” the difference. This psychological distance signifies more than cultural difference. As studies point out, the seeming self-segregation among racial minority youths is not completely determined by

their own *choices* (Abelmann 2009; Tatum 1997). Mark, however, seeks to understand the racialized social relationship only through this lens.

The Asian-populated neighborhood context helps shape the respondents' culturally-oriented conception of race relations. The strong visibility of Asian populations and shared community values prevents the respondents from being challenged by oppressive racism. Nonetheless, respondents were not raised in a vacuum; they were indirectly but constantly influenced by the larger racial structure. Their perception of social incorporation, based on cultured race, reflects the ongoing impact of race, which the next section analyzes.

#### **4.3.2. "I felt limitations on myself!": The Dilemma of Cultural Inferiority**

In Korea towns where whiteness is not regarded as normal, my respondents are less likely to experience social pressure to assimilate that is prevalent among those from non-Korea towns. Nonetheless, during childhood and adolescence, the respondents from Korea towns develop a distinctive idea of racial hierarchy based on their conception of cultured race. Studies suggest that although Asian immigrant children are relatively insulated from harsh racism because of the ethnic community, they are not free from the racial categorization by the dominant race (Pyke and Dang 2003; Kibria 2002; Tuan 1998). Growing up, they construct their ethnic and racial identities in a constant relationship with the racial meanings and stereotypes from the mainstream

(Pyke and Dang 2003; Kibria 2000). My respondents from Korea towns also constitute their conception of racial hierarchy under the influence of the dominant racial schemes. According to my respondents' narratives, this process is often mediated by inter- and intra-racial interactions.

Although the respondents from Korea towns are more likely to define their co-ethnic homophily with cultural commonality, there is a within-group distinction based on their perceived level of acculturation (Pyke and Dang 2003). Respondents recall that Korean immigrant children tend to divide the co-ethnic group into several factions according to the extent to which they are "Americanized" and label the other factions as "too Americanized" or "too Korean." Through the intra-ethnic distinction, respondents not only attempt to maintain their ethnic pride, but also accept the racialized value of Asian inferiority, mainly by looking down on newly immigrated Korean peers, or "FOBs" (Fresh Off the Boat) (Pyke and Dang 2003). In addition, Asian Americans are often racialized as "foreigners" in a society in which they are regarded as unassimilable to the mainstream race (Tuan 1998; Kim 1999). The Koreanized peers, or "Korean Koreans" according to respondents' term, fit well with the foreigner image from which my respondents attempt to distance themselves (Lee 1996). Eunice is a 24-year-old female who came to the U.S. at age 2. She grew up in New York and enrolled in schools with racially diverse student body. When asked whether there were any racial conflicts

between students in secondary schools, Eunice introduced an episode she had with “Koreanized” peers who had newly immigrated.

So maybe one girl was very Koreanized and in Korea, there is a culture of seniority so if you’re in school and someone’s two year older than you, you have to do like a 90 degree bow as a sign of respect but in America, we don’t have that, we just raise our hand and say hi. You know, but um...like some kids in junior high, they came straight from Korea or they’re more Koreanized and they saw someone younger than them who would just like pretend that they didn’t see them or didn’t say hello, they would pick on them and say like “you’re being disrespectful” and just be ridiculous. So I guess there are conflicts like that. Yeah...if they felt there was not enough respect going on.... But it’s just that the Korean culture they decided to keep in their head.

Although Eunice maintained friendships mainly with co-ethnics, she blamed the newly-immigrated Koreans for maintaining a Korean culture of seniority. Her response to the behaviors of the “fobby”<sup>4</sup> students appears to be a natural consequence of her acculturated attitudes; at the same time, she participates in reproducing the stereotypical image of Asians in general. Eunice seeks to generalize the fobby Koreans’ “ridiculous” cultural practices as general traits of the Korean culture.

Respondents also developed negative perceptions of Korean culture and ethnicity in their interactions with family and ethnic churches, as well as co-ethnic peers. Even though the upbringing practices of the immigrant families are taken for granted in

---

<sup>4</sup> “Fob” is a n informal word for “Fresh Off the Boat,” or children who recently immigrated (Pyke and Dang 2003)

Korea towns, they tend to see their family relations through the larger society's image of middle-class white families, often stigmatizing their parents as authoritative and patriarchal (Pyke 2000). Similarly, respondents often describe ethnic churches where many Korean immigrants and their children are affiliated as exclusive and hierarchical. These comments contrast with the scholarly image of ethnic communities as stressing their culture's positive role in retaining ethnic values (for instance, Portes and Zhou 1993). My respondents from Korea towns seek to maintain the ethnic norms and values in terms of ethnic prides and, at the same time, see them in comparison with the ideological image of middle-class white norms.

The sense of cultural inferiority, prevalent among informants from Korea towns, contributes to shaping their perception of assimilation. Recalling their childhood and adolescence, informants are less likely to report any perceived restriction in integrating into the white circle. However, they often state that they are culturally inferior compared to whites, which becomes a barrier to fully incorporate into their white peers. Joanne, a 24-year-old native-born woman, grew up in the Korea Town of New York. When asked of the difference between Korean and American families, she makes a statement:

A lot of white...white kids they're very cultured. They know a lot about a lot of things, about the world. Korean kids, they don't really. They don't talk at the dinner table about issues, these things. Their parents don't. Our parents will educate us about Korean things only if we asked so you know, you'll see in college, a lot of the white kids, they're very cultural, they're very knowledgeable. They know how to argue, they know how to talk to authority figures. But for us Asian kids, we ... we



don't. We're fearful of authority you know, we're not taught to question authority, to talk to...to converse, yeah. I think that starts in the family. (Pause) Yeah.

Given that her social circle in her neighborhood and schools was centered on co-ethnics, Joanne's comments are quite striking. Joanne introduced cultural disadvantages of Koreans to compare herself with white peers. She described Korean immigrant children as disadvantaged regarding cultural and social competence, not regarding her skin color. Also, by using "we," "Asian kids," and "Korean kids," Joanne signifies these cultural disadvantages are applicable to Asian-American youth in general. Korean immigrants' childrearing practices are blamed for the disadvantages (Pyke 2000). The cultural limitation of Korean families, in her perception, result in the underperformance of Korean Americans in the mainstream economy.

My informants from Korea towns tend to relate their sense of cultural inferiority to social mobility. Not only do respondents tend to attribute their inferiority to their families, but also to themselves. Studies suggest that the negative stereotypes on racial minorities are not only imposed by the privileged race, but also that minorities internalize the stereotypes and underperform on a variety of tasks given to them (Steele 1997). The narratives of my respondents correspond with the research. Catherine is a 32-year-old, native-born, married woman who grew up in New York. When asked whether she was treated differently in high school due to her race, Catherine blames herself for her underperformance at school.

As a Korean American, I felt different in the class. Meaning it was hard for me to participate. They, a lot of the American education encourages discussion and more assertive behavior that I had difficulty doing. So I never raised my hand. I just did my homework. But I had difficulty adjusting to the, like even if I read the English homework, for example, it's hard to talk about what I thought because I wasn't used to raising my hand and saying my opinion. And I think that's a Korean thing, honestly. I don't... Because I had trouble in college too. I was a history major so we should talk a lot in groups. I had nothing to say! I did all my homework but I'm not kind of... I wish that I was more... I wish in retrospect, in my family, we kind of encouraged more proactive behavior because I find myself very reluctant as a person and as an adult to say something. Even though I could be thinking ten thousand things, but so.... *I never felt discriminated against, but I felt limitation on myself because I was aware of my.... I was aware that I was different or my value somehow was inherently different but it's hard to adjust myself to fit the American education.* I think I could have done better in school if I talked a little more or something like that. [emphasis added]

Her confession is striking given that she is a native-born. Similar to the informants from non-Korea towns, Catherine states that she "felt different" in her school setting. However, her perceived difference is associated with cultural difference rather than racial difference ("I never felt discriminated against but I felt limitation on myself"). Not only does she attribute her cultural disadvantages to the upbringing of Korean immigrant families, but also her Koreanness itself. By stressing the inner limitation, Catherine's narrative signifies that Korean Americans are not able to incorporate fully into the mainstream.

Respondents from Korea towns, in a sense, are a typical example of selective assimilation; ethnic communities prevent them from racism and facilitate assimilation of

immigrant children through ethnic values and institutions (Portes and Zhou 1993). The narratives of my informants, however, reveal that the insulated community is not free from the ongoing influence of the racial categorization by the privileged race. The intra- and inter-racial interactions mediate the racialization process, leading informants to internalize cultural inferiority. The respondents use the perceived inferiority to signify their limitation in assimilation.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examine Korean immigrant children's perception of inter- and intra-racial relationship and social incorporation. A comparison of the two subgroups, the respondents from non-Korea towns and Korea towns, reveals that there is marked difference in their perceptions by context. According to their retrospective narratives, the informants from non-Korea towns, where whiteness is regarded as normal and anti-Asian racism is prevalent, define interracial relationship primarily based on physical and hierarchical difference. Their skin color and cultural heritages are acknowledged as abnormal and therefore deviant. As a numeric minority in non-Korea towns, respondents conceive of incorporation into a white mainstream as "forced" but unattainable. By contrast, cultural commonality and difference is a dominant theme with which the respondents from Korea towns consider their inter- and intra-racial relationship. Co-ethnic homophily is regarded as natural among these respondents.

While disregarding the existence of any racial barriers for assimilation, they tend to develop a sense of cultural inferiority as an “internal” barrier for assimilation.

In the next chapter, I revisit the question of social incorporation to explore my respondents’ narratives surrounding labor market inequality. By using a discourse analysis, I focus my analysis on how occupational standings shape the respondents’ perceived incorporation in the labor market.

## 5. Occupations and Divergent Modes of Incorporation

“There’s what’s called a glass ceiling. So, you know, as long as you work hard, I think you can go up, but there’s something that a lot of Asian folks don’t know about socializing, so if you miss a party, that’s a time to socialize with your bosses and, you know, they don’t think that’s important but it is”

Jenny, Medical Field, Female, 47

“I was very good at my job and I was moving up but I, in my mind, I thought that I couldn’t move up higher to the vice president level, even though my vice president was Korean, ok, yeah but I thought, and the reason why I didn’t fit in is because I felt like, I did not know, I wasn’t proficient enough in white cultural capital to really, um, navigate the, you know, I don’t know how you say it, not social but just like, just how to navigate the micro-politics in the organization.”

Yuna, Educational Field, Female, 36

### 5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how occupational standings affect subjective understanding of racial inequality. Drawing upon the Korean American respondents’ narratives surrounding racial inequality in the labor market and workplaces, I identify the types of discourses that the respondents place on their talks and the difference in the types by occupational standing. I utilize a critical discourse analysis to investigate the respondents’ discourses. I specifically focuses on two elements of the racist discourses: an ideological frame, an “interpretive repertoire” provided by the dominant race to rationalize the racial status quo (Bonilla-Silva 2006), and a storyline, an argumentative discursive strategy utilized to support the ideological frames (Wodak 1996). In this chapter, I seek to answer the following questions: How do Korean Americans

understand racial inequality in the labor market and workplaces? How do their occupational standings differentiate their understanding of racial inequality? Which ideological frames and storylines do they place on their talks and how do the discursive strategies vary by their occupational standings? How do these discursive strategies reflect their racial identities?

The discourse analysis reveals that there is significant variation in the discursive strategies that my respondents place on their narratives of racial inequality by occupation standing. The informants who are engaged in the “Asian field of occupation” (Min and Jang 2013; Louie 2004), such as STEM- and healthcare-related jobs, are characterized by their tendency to deny or minimize racial discrimination in the labor market and workplaces. On the other hand, those from Asian-underrepresented occupations are categorized by their tendency to acknowledge racial inequality. Respondents in Asian-clustered occupations predominantly employ the “cultural racism” frame, a racist frame that attributes racial inequality to minorities’ cultural inferiority (Bonilla-Silva 2006), justifying racial inequality with cultural difference, to minimize the significance of racism in the labor market. These discursive strategies reflect the selective inclusion of Asian Americans in the white mainstream, as well as the respondents’ ambivalent racial identity.

### **5.1.1. Methodological Strategy**

For this chapter, I categorize my informants into two subgroups according to the types of occupation where Asian Americans are clustered or underrepresented. Similar to other ethnoracial groups, Asian Americans are racialized in line with the occupational hierarchy, as well as the racial hierarchy (Ong et al. 1994). They are conceived of as a race of people who are “naturally” excellent in math and science, while not sociable and not creative, so they fit well with technical jobs, such as computer programmer, engineer, or healthcare (Paek and Shah 2003; Taylor et al. 2005). This racialized image of Asian Americans also corresponds with the group’s concentration on certain occupations. They are disproportionately represented in STEM and healthcare fields, as well as in traditionally immigrant-concentrated fields including retail sales, textile, and cleaning and food service (Xie and Goyette 2004). Although children and grandchildren of immigrants are becoming diversified in occupational choices (Min and Jang 2013), Asian Americans face racial expectations in occupation largely unchanged. I define the Asian-clustered occupations by following Xie and Goyette’s (2004) classification based on the 2000 census. I excluded the traditional Asian-clustered occupations, such as retail sales and textile jobs, from consideration because they do not correspond with the current racial expectation of Asian Americans. Among my informants, 22 respondents (about 32%) have held Asian-clustered occupations, while 47 respondents (about 68%) hold Asian-underrepresented occupations.

I focus my analysis on informants' narratives that directly or indirectly describe racial inequality relative to their *own* industries and workplaces. I analyze their narratives on informants' own experiences with racism and discrimination in the labor markets and workplaces in Chapter 6. During the interviews, the informants stated their opinions about labor-market racial inequality when I asked about a variety of job-related issues of racial discrimination, stereotypes, promotion, racial composition, and networking.

## **5.2. Typology of Racial Identification**

### **5.2.1. Korean Americans with Asian-Clustered Occupations**

Contemporary racism in the post-civil rights era is characterized by its subtle and covert nature. This holds true in the labor market, where explicit discrimination rarely exists but a variety of seemingly neutral social processes contribute to racial inequality (Royster 2003; Pager 2003). This transformed nature of discrimination in the labor market makes it difficult for minorities to recognize, and resist, unequal treatment (for instance, see Royster 2003). Moreover, Asian Americans are less likely than other people of color to report discrimination, partly due to their cultural orientation (Kuo 1995; Kim 2011; Hirsh and Lyons 2010). My Korean American informants also tend not to report racial treatments in the labor market and workplaces. Only 21 informants (about 30%) report racial treatments in the labor market.



Moreover, color-blind racial ideology contributes to minorities' ignorance of discrimination by rationalizing and justifying the racial status quo. Unlike the majority of whites who predominantly endorse color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006), the extent to which racial minorities believe in it varies by other factors including race, gender, or class (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick 2001; O'Brien 2008). My Korean informants also utilize color-blind racism to understand, and ignore, the reality of racial inequality. The narratives of informants reveal that there is significant variation in discursive strategies by occupational standing. The informants who have held Asian-clustered occupations are characterized by the systematic application of color-blind racist frames to describe observed or potential racial inequality. On the other hand, those who have held Asian-underrepresented occupations rarely utilize the frames.

Among the entire group of informants with Asian-clustered occupations (22 informants), 13 informants (about 64%) utilize certain racist frames to describe perceived racial inequality in labor markets and workplaces. Given that among this subgroup only 14 informants state opinions about labor market inequality, more than 90% of the informants who witness the opinions mobilize the frames. Cultural racism, a racist frame that attributes racial inequality to minorities' cultural inferiority, is the predominant racist frame for describing perceived racial inequality in the labor markets and workplaces, while other racist frames are also utilized in few cases. For instance, Christian is a typical case. A 24-year-old man who immigrated with his parents at the

age of four, Christian currently works in the financial field. When asked whether he thinks being Korean American has any negative impact on job interviews, Christian at first emphasizes Asian Americans' educational achievement and quickly moves his narrative to cultural inferiority that might influence employment in the financial sector.

Um, no, I don't think so. I think because in, especially in finance, um, so many Asian-American people apply and kind of take those jobs. So I don't really think so. Um, and I think part of that is a function of, I think in America there's this phenomenon whereby I think Asian-American people are over-represented in colleges and universities relative to the percentage of the population. So because of that I think typically to get like a banking or private equity or those type of jobs, you have to be kind of in the target school range and Asian-Americans are kind of over-represented. So I don't, I think it's pretty common, so I don't think it really affected my job search. *I do think that, you know, a lot has been written about the fact that Asian-American are a little more quiet and timid and less aggressive. I think that's true. I still think it's true, and I think that might change the way interviews go and job interactions go. But at least for me, um, I don't think I'm too much like that so it didn't really affect me* but I do think generally, broadly speaking, that element plays a role, but I don't think it's because people look at you or they see your name. [emphasis added]

Respondents with Asian-clustered occupations, like Christian, strongly believe in meritocracy in the mainstream labor market and therefore relate their educational achievement to their current job position. Asian-clustered occupations are understood among Asian Americans as one major path to upward mobility through educational certificates (Xie and Goyette 2003; Sue and Okazaki 1990; Louie 2004). This perception of Asian-clustered occupations leads the informants not to question meritocracy in their own industries; they rarely utilize the "abstract liberalism" frame (Bonilla-Silva 2006), or

merit ideology, to explain disadvantages of Asian Americans. Rather, the respondents with Asian-clustered occupations seek to explain racial inequality by introducing a discourse of cultural racism. Like Christian, they tend to attribute possible discrimination in employment and workplaces to cultural and behavioral traits of Asian Americans. Asian-clustered occupations are in general high-paying and high-status and likely to be satisfied with their social status. Also, respondents with these occupations fit with the popular image of “model minority”; they are likely to be treated more favorably by the white mainstream. The informants with Asian-clustered occupations, thus, tend to stick to the model minority image to maintain their social status (Dhingra 2007).

The informants with Asian-clustered occupations point out that there are ways that Asian Americans are disadvantaged. According to their narratives, first, Asian Americans’ lack of English fluency and behavioral passivity become a disadvantage in the hiring processes. Second, in more cases, the informants state that Asian cultural inferiority matters more in interpersonal relationships in workplaces, affecting promotion and evaluation. Racial discrimination in the hiring processes, in many cases, is invisible to racial minorities (Royster 2003; Pager 2005) and the informants often utilize the formal recruitment systems provided by colleges and professional schools. These factors partly explain why they more frequently mention workplaces rather than employment. Stressing workplace relationships among respondents corresponds with

the studies of other racial minority professionals (Flores 2011; García-López 2008; Wingfield 2010). The studies highlight how minority professionals stress racial factors shaping workplace interactions. However, Korean American informants with Asian-clustered jobs emphasize the role of culture rather than racial factors in workplace, endorsing the meritocracy of social capital (Royster 2003).

A unique discursive challenge that the respondents with Asian-clustered occupations face is a contradictory co-existence of occupational (or class) identity as a successful, middle-class professional and racial identity as an “inferior” model minority. Informants utilize additional argumentative strategies as a tentative solution to the contradiction, which I outline in later sections. As shown in Christian’s narrative, one strategy, termed “co-ethnic othering,” refers to attributing cultural inferiority to “other” co-ethnics, not the self (Pyke and Dang 2003; Schwalbe et al. 2000). In another strategy, termed as “internalization,” informants blame themselves for poor performance in their workplaces. By utilizing these additional discursive strategies, informants with Asian-clustered occupations seek to negotiate their contradictory narratives.

In addition to cultural racism, the informants with Asian-clustered occupations occasionally mobilize other racist frames, such as “abstract liberalism,” “naturalization

of racism,”<sup>5</sup> and “minimization of racism,”<sup>6</sup> in the racial-inequality narratives. In many cases, these ideology frames are utilized to supplement and support the cultural racism discourses. Michelle, a 24-year-old woman, is a typical example. She is a native-born Korean American and works in the financial sector. When I asked whether she thinks being Korean American affects workplace evaluation, Michelle witnesses,

I think it could definitely. I mean...depending on the workplace you're in or...on who...consists of your...or the what the workplace consist of. Um...I mean I think it all does depend on who you know or how you present yourself, I mean if you fit the stereotypical mold as of...you know...docile...[pause]you know, type Asian and you know...you're very silent about your opinions and just you know, go about your day with no interaction with people [laughter], you know, you'll tend to get less noticed than those who are much more vocal about their thoughts, who more interact more with the managers.... I think it can definitely affect you...if you act...[in a] certain way but um.. you know it obviously depends on the managers. If they have some sort of bias...or if they don't have bias... they have favoritism over certain races over others...it [is] all dependent on that person. As much as they promote diversity, it really...it's up to...it's really up to the managers to decide who they promote to...but we so far...this past year, I haven't seen uh...any unfair promotions in my eyes so....

Michelle acknowledges the possibility of racially unequal treatments in her industry, but quickly minimizes the significance of her opinion by stating that it depends on what workplaces people occupy. This minimization discourse functions to

---

<sup>5</sup> It is a racist ideological frame to suggest that racial phenomena result from “natural occurrences” (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

<sup>6</sup> It is a racist ideological frame to suggest that “discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances” (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 29).

support her main discourse of cultural racism. At the end of the conversation, Michelle moves to another minimization tactic, by saying that only “certain persons” discriminate against people of color. Like Michelle, the respondents with Asian-clustered occupations predominantly mobilize cultural racism as a discursive strategy in racial inequality narratives but also, in some cases, utilize other racial ideological frames to compensate for their arguments.

### **5.2.2. Korean Americans with Asian-underrepresented Occupations**

Compared to those with Asian-clustered occupations, the respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations mobilize racial ideological frames to describe their opinions about racial inequality much less frequently. Among the respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations (47 respondents), only eight respondents (17%) utilize color-blind racism when expressing their opinions about labor market and workplace inequalities. Given that only 19 respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations express any opinion about labor market inequality, many of them are also influenced by color-blind racism but their narratives are, in many aspects, qualitatively different from those of the respondents in Asian-clustered occupations.

Respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations are more likely than those with Asian-clustered occupations to understand racial inequality in the labor market in a “political” way. In other words, they tend to state that race might play a role

in employment and workplaces leading to racial inequality. Or, at least, they tend to describe their opinions without any racist frames. Nancy's narrative provides one typical instance. A 37-year-old, native-born female, Nancy works in a federal government agency. When asked whether she thinks that there are fewer racial treatments in the public sector than the private sector, she witnesses,

I don't know, I mean I guess like I said, in government, they're very more enforcing of that and it's, I guess [my agency] is just very *political* so when you're in a *political* environment, like those things are very, there's legal people, it's very sensitive. Whereas like if you're in like CVS, like and your boss is racist he could treat you like whatever and nobody else sees it, behind the scenes, you know. Whereas this job is a lot more visible with, you know like our meetings have like 30 people, you can't, there's just a lot more team, group work and you can't get away with it, you have to learn how to, even if you have those opinions, you can't show it or say it because you would be accused of something probably. [emphasis added]

During the interview, Nancy states that she has not been treated differently in her workplace. Rather than sticking to the racial ideology to explain racial equality, however, Nancy attributes the apparent equality to the organization's "political environment." For Nancy, equal treatment in her workplace is actually a product of political enforcement and racism and discrimination might happen in a less visible workplace. Another typical case is Yuna. A 36-year-old female who immigrated at age 6, Yuna works in the educational sector after changing jobs several times. When asked why she quit the previous job, Yuna points out the racial environment in the previous workplace.

Um, cause I was very good at my job and I was moving up but I, in my mind, I thought that I couldn't move up higher than the vice president level, even though my vice president was Korean, ok, yeah but I thought, and the reason why I didn't fit in is because I felt like I did not know, I wasn't proficient enough in *white cultural capital* to really, um, navigate the, you know, I don't know how you say it, not social but just like, just how to navigate the *micro-politics* in the organization. Like how you talk to people, how you relate, how do you make decisions, how do you, um, navigate *politics* in the office. I really felt like I didn't know how to do that.  
[emphasis added]

Yuna's narrative is dramatically distinct from those with Asian-clustered occupations. On a surface level, she seems to acknowledge her personal deficiency in networking in her workplace, which the respondents with Asian-clustered occupations often attribute to Asians' cultural inferiority. By mentioning "white cultural capital", however, Yuna points out that the organizational culture and norms are set and maintained by the white mainstream (Wingfield and Alston 2013; Wingfield 2010). Although those with Asian-clustered jobs believe labor market norms and culture are about professionalism—or, at least, race neutral—Yuna tends to regard them as the "micro-politics" by which racial minorities are implicitly excluded from the white-dominated workplaces.

The working environments of the respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations are qualitatively distinct from those with Asian-clustered occupations, in terms of the racial expectations for Asian Americans. In other words, even though they have also held high-status jobs, respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations



do not often fit with the occupational stereotypes of Asian Americans. The Asian stereotypes and expectations are more likely to affect their employment processes and racial interactions negatively in those occupations. Moreover, respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations are more likely to be a numeric minority in their workplaces, as well as in their industries; their workplace interactions are limited and excluded from the majority whites. Due to these factors, they tend to be more critical of their work environments than those with Asian-clustered occupations. The topics they raise, compared to those with Asian-clustered jobs, are not limited to peer interactions in workplaces. They range from employment processes to workplace interactions to industry-wise situations.

Not all of the respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations describe their industries and workplaces critically. Although not generalizable due to snowball sampling, a preliminary analysis reveals that among the respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations, those in the legal sector are more likely to utilize racial ideological frames. Although this occupation is not Asian-clustered and does not correspond stereotypes about Asians, the law is a preferred job among Asian parents for their children's career (Min 1998; Louie 2004). Law, as well as STEM-related occupations, are regarded in Asian American communities as "Asian fields" (Louie 2004). It is likely that the respondents in the legal field, similar to respondents in Asian-clustered fields, internalize the model minority image while growing up. Additionally, compared to

others in Asian-underrepresented fields, those in the legal field have higher income and social status. Such class advantages might lead them to have white-like racial identities in their narratives (Bonilla-Silva 2002).

In short, respondents with Asian-underrepresented occupations, except for those in the legal field, are less likely to utilize color-blind racism to understand their workplace racial inequality than those in Asian-clustered occupations. They acknowledge, or at least do not deny, that race might be a crucial factor to explain labor market dynamics. The respondents' narratives suggest that those with Asian-underrepresented occupations are not fully included in the mainstream economy.

### ***5.3. Discourses of Cultural Racism***

The cultural racism discourse that informants with Asian-clustered occupations generally employ consists of linguistic/rhetorical and argumentative strategies, styles, and storylines respectively (Van Dijk 2006). Unlike the ideological frames, the forms and contents of the ideological styles and storylines depend on the contexts where informants are situated (Bonilla-Silva 2006). The narratives of informants with Asian-clustered occupations reveal that they tend to rely more on the storylines than the styles to make sense of their assertions. Since I focus my analysis on informants' opinions rather than their experiences, it is likely that they do not need rhetorical devices to transmit messages to avoid "sounding serious" (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Rather, since

informants have to deal with their *own* cultural inferiority through the cultural racism frame, it seems more crucial to utilize the argumentative strategies by which they negotiate the contradiction between Asian inferiority and their success. The storylines that my informants utilize reflect their racial identity (Somers 1994).

### **5.3.1. Co-ethnic Othering**

The discourse of cultural racism that those with Asian-clustered occupations employ has two main storylines: *co-ethnic othering* and *internalization*. Co-ethnic othering refers to an argumentative strategy by which respondents acknowledge cultural and behavioral deficiency of Asian Americans as a possible disadvantage in the labor market and, at the same time, deny its application to themselves. Seven respondents with Asian-clustered occupations (about 54%) address this strategy. Although the similar cultural practices are prevalent among many subordinate groups (Schwalbe et al. 2000), studies suggest that in case of Asian Americans, the othering tactic reflects their intermediate position in the American racial hierarchy (Pyke and Dang 2003). By utilizing the co-ethnic othering storylines, the informants with Asian-clustered occupations endorse the racial ideological frame that racializes Asian Americans as a “group” superior to “blacks” but culturally inferior to whites; simultaneously, they identify themselves as “individuals” who are culturally similar to white peers. There are two ways to distinguish themselves from other co-ethnics among the informants with Asian-

clustered occupations. First, some of them state that some Korean Americans might be disadvantaged in the labor market and workplaces due to their “thick accent.” Joe is a typical example. He is 41 years old and currently works in the IT industry. He immigrated with his parents at the age of two. Joe employs the co-ethnic othering strategy when I ask if Korean American identity affects hiring.

As a Korean American, has it become an obstacle for anything? No. I, I’ve never had anything be an obstacle because I was Korean American. But *I do think that there are obstacles out there for Korean Americans who are less, how would I say, less Americanized than me. I have no accent.* When somebody talks to me on the phone, they don’t know, until they see me, they don’t know I’m, I’m Korean American or Asian American, right? But if someone was interviewing you on the phone and, or someone who has an accent, I think there is barriers or obstacles for those people. Even when they meet face to face and they realize, “oh, how long have you been in this country?” How long have, you know, uh, you know, even, even though your resume and your background may be fantastic, there is that, *I think it is not a discrimination based on your ethnicity or your color, it’s a discrimination against your communication.* Does that make sense? And I think that happens a lot. Even, even as small as, I’ll be in a McDonald’s, alright? And let’s say somebody walks up to a Hispanic counter person. And the Hispanic counter person has, like, you know, a very thick accent. “Oh, how can I help you today?” You know, whatever, and then there, there’s a, there’s a difficulty understanding that person. Or vice versa. Let’s say it’s the, the person is, is not, I mean the, the uh, McDonald’s employee is talking to someone who has a very thick accent. Again, that’s that communication, what I call communication discrimination based on the, you know, accent. And sometimes, people, what I would say, how is it, enhance it or they blow it out of proportion, um, *and I think that can be an obstacle, especially for Korean Americans as well as all Asian Americans as well as anyone who has an accent.* But personally for me as a Korean American, no. I didn’t see anything. [emphasis added]

Joe at first contrasts his own case with those of “less Americanized” Korean Americans. By distinguishing him from others (Van Dijk 1992), Joe signifies that there is

discrimination against Korean Americans in employment but he is exceptional. The storyline perpetuates the stereotype of (Asian) immigrants that they have thick accents and serious problems communicating, racializing Asian Americans as a “forever foreigners” (Tuan 1998): Joe discursively participates in reproducing the racialization of Asian Americans. At the same time, by emphasizing his distinctiveness as Americanized, he implicitly acknowledges the cultural superiority of whiteness (Pyke and Dang 2003).

Also, in Joe’s narrative, the cultural racist frame is utilized to rationalize discrimination against Korean Americans by attributing its causes to “accent” and “communication” rather than “ethnicity” and “color.” However, many studies, as well as many of my respondents, suggest that Asian Americans are often regarded as foreigners not because of their accents or communication but because of their appearance (Tuan 1998; Kibria 2000). Joe’s assertion of discrimination based on accents, thus, does not reflect Asian Americans’ racialized experiences.

More common among the informants with Asian-clustered occupations, second, is othering co-ethnics by cultural or professional “social skills.” It corresponds with the widespread Asian stereotypes as intellectually smart but socially inept (Englash 2002). The informants with Asian-clustered occupations often blame Korean Americans’ lack of social skill for possible disadvantages in workplaces. The respondents address cultural heritages and upbringing for possible causes of relatively poor social competence. An

example is Jun, a 50-year-old man who immigrated at the age of 10. He currently works in the finance industry. When asked whether being Korean American is a disadvantage in getting ahead in the labor market, Jun states,

So I think, you know, so I don't think Asians stand up for themselves as much as they should. So you don't see a lot of Asian activists, right. But when you see, walking by Wall Street, how many agents do you see in the group? Zero, right. So I think that's part of the Korean culture and Asian culture is not to complain, right. So the Buddhist philosophy and so the personality is sort of like that. One on one they're very open and they talk like, I think as a general rule they just don't like to complain and, going back to that rule with the golf etiquette right? When the other person is doing something that obviously is not appropriate but the other people doesn't complain to them so they continue to do it so the continuation of the bad etiquette because nobody complains with a person saying, hey, you shouldn't be doing that. You just deal with it. So I think affects to some degree the positions that they go into. In my position there's a lot of conflict and discussion of very difficult topics. You know a client gives you money and the market goes down and they confront you and you got to deal with it and you got to explain, the communication has to be there, right. When you're an analyst there is none of that. There's no coincidence even in another avenue of looking at it, that so many Asians are analysts because there is no, you're just doing your job and you just go home, there is no conflict interaction. There is no that difficult conversation that you have constantly in my position where and in that position, in the analyst position, you just do your job, you know somebody asks you to do, crunch some numbers, you crunch numbers and that's it. So, yeah, I think in, you know, in some ways the Asian personality is a disadvantage in some fields where you have to have a lot of communication. [emphasis added]

In the other parts of the interview, Jun witnesses that he is an exceptionally successful case in his field and sees few other Asian Americans in higher positions in the financial industry. In his opinion, social skills are far more important than formal education in workplaces to get ahead. Asian American workers' lack of discussion

tactics and conflict-managing skills are attributable to Asian culture, Buddhism, and “Asian personality.” This cultural inferiority, according to Jun, results in the group’s concentration in technical occupations and in the middle-position in the organizational ladder. By relying on this cultural frame, Jun ignores prevalent racial discrimination against Asians, as well as racial minority professionals, in the labor market (Woo 2000; Chou and Feagin 2008) and the poisonous effects of racial stereotypes on performances of racial minorities (Steele 1997).

Jun utilizes the othering storylines to explain his exceptional success and other Asian Americans fallen behind. He seeks to generalize Asians’ lack of social skills by repetitively using the pronoun, “you.” In another part of the interview, Jun witnesses he and his siblings have different a “personality” that led them to succeed. He uses the word personality in two ways. When describing Asian Americans in general, personality refers to the group’s general characteristic. When explaining Jun’s success, it designates an individual trait. The co-ethnic othering storyline is incoherent in itself; it reflects the respondents’ ambivalent racial identity that endorses Asian inferiority as a group and asserts the self’s exceptionality as an individual.

Another instance is Chong. He is a 27-year-old male pharmacist who came to the U.S. with his parents when he was aged five. When I asked Chong whether employers evaluate Asian Americans differently from whites, he says:

Um, [pause] I, I think, I think so. But maybe in a good way, I think, because, they generally people think that we're smarter as Asians and um [pause], and also they, they, they realize that we're, we're diligent and we're very hard working and they understand that. So I, I believe that it can actually help us [pause] as, as, as long as we're qualified. You know, some people think, you have an Asian candidate and a white candidate some people think just because he's Asian he didn't get picked. *But maybe he wasn't qualified, you know, maybe he didn't uh, maybe he's not a good public speaker. I, I don't think I'm a good public speaker, you know. Maybe he's not a good manager. You know maybe he's not uh, uh, maybe he doesn't develop personal relationships, you know. So I think a lot of people maybe use the, they Asian aspect as an excuse sometimes.* I think, I, I think, you know, I think from what I've seen, I think um, people are selected on a fair basis according to their, to their accomplishments and their education. [emphasis added]

Chong employs the abstract liberalism and cultural racism frames to construct his discourse. By stressing "accomplishments" and "education" on the surface level, he seeks to stick to the meritocracy in the American labor market. At the same time, Chong acknowledges that Asian stereotypes play a positive role in upward mobility of Asian Americans. This cultural ideological frame attributes Asian Americans' success in the mainstream economy to the group's collective traits, minimizing the role of individual endeavors.

The co-ethnic othering storyline that Chong utilizes, however, seeks to individualize the possible causes of discrimination. Unlike Jun, Chong repetitively uses the pronoun "he" to attribute racial treatments in the labor market to individual occurrences. Certain Asians, according to Chong's discourse, might face the glass ceiling because of the manager's individual prejudice about Asians' lack of social skills.



Through the individualizing othering strategy, Chong distinguishes his case from other those of other Asian Americans.

### **5.3.2. Internalization**

Internalization is another discursive strategy the informants with Asian-clustered occupations use to mobilize the cultural racism frame. Respondents using this strategy describe Asian inferiority as accurately applying to themselves, as well as other co-ethnics. Research suggests that subordinates, women, or racial minorities, often seek to adapt to their powerless position by maintaining the existing benefits from the power relations in exchange for accepting subordinate status (Schwalbe et al. 2000). The intermediate racial position of Asian Americans in the American racial hierarchy brings them limited but significant rewards in the labor market compared to African Americans (Kim 1999). By accepting their intermediate racial status, some of my informants seek to maintain the relative benefits as a model minority. Among informants with Asian-clustered occupations, four informants employ this storylines. One example is Taehan, a 49-year-old man who came to the U.S. when he was 6. He is a professor. When I asked about any challenge that Korean Americans might face in academia, Taehan states,

I don't know. I guess one thing. But this doesn't apply to everyone. Given that I am Asian American and uh [pause] and again, I don't think it applies to everyone, but

you have to be a good writer, right, to be successful in academics. Because I think I straddle two languages and two cultures, even though I grew up mostly in English, you know, my Korean is not that great and my first language is English. *I still feel like I am at a disadvantage 'cause I can't write as well as [if] I was a white person or grew up as a pure American.* Let's say if I was born here and I started, or even if my parents were, if they were 1.5 generation and if I was second generation or third generation, I think my language skills would be better. My writing skills would be better. I feel like I don't write as well as I should and I think that is a little bit of a disadvantage in my career. And another thing is [pause] and sometimes in academics, you have to speak up to get something. Right? And *most of us, I don't know, part of it is our culture. We don't want to disagree, we don't want to complain. So we don't say anything so we don't get what we should get. Other people get what they want. So I think that is a little bit of a disadvantage.* Because part of what academics is disagreeing, arguing, and trying to present your opinion to get what you want. But *we are sort of [pause] accept whatever is given to us, so we just keep quiet. And I think that is part of maybe my personality also, so maybe that is a disadvantage.* Uh, what else [pause] I don't know if there is significant challenges, but I think those are some of the minor challenges that maybe speak more to me than Asian Americans, I don't know, what Korean Americans, I am not sure. [emphasis added]

The cultural racist discourse is predominant in Taehan's narrative. He does not mention any racism or discrimination as a possible cause of workplace disadvantages for Korean Americans. Language and social skills, according to Taehan, are disadvantages that might negatively affect getting ahead in the industry. Jun attributes these cultural disadvantages partly to his immigrant status as a 1.5 generation and partly to Asian culture, which leads him to idealize the status and merits of a "pure American." Given that Taehan started his former education in the U.S., earned his doctoral degree, and has worked in academia for fifteen years, his assertion of cultural inferiority seems quite striking. His narratives corresponds with many psychological

studies about the effect of stereotypes on subjective appraisal among subordinates (Steele 1997).

In employing the internalization storylines, Taehan frequently uses the pronoun “we,” which reflects that he seeks to generalize Asian stereotypes to include himself. Asian culture, as well as his immigrant status, is transferred to his “personality.” By regarding cultural inferiority as his personality, he accepts the Asian stereotypes as true and real. For Taehan, as a successful professor, this deficiency is a “minor challenge” that does not challenge his status as a model minority.

Suki’s narrative provides another instance. A 38-year-old female doctor, Suki came to the U.S. with her parents just after she was just born in Korea. Although she is a second generation, Suki shares a similar storyline with Taehan. Suki was asked whether she thinks being Asian American affects being evaluated in the medical fields and witnesses,

Um, inadvertently. Well for me, I mean I think, again this a big, this [is] a stereotype, but just like, um, my parents didn’t raise me to express my opinion and defend my opinion. It wasn’t, that wasn’t a big emphasis. That wasn’t, but I feel like that’s a big, that’s how you um, that’s how other people hear your ideas. So, the way they raised me wasn’t for an American society, you know, that was, so in that sense I do think, um, you kind of have to be a self-promoter to move places, I think. That’s my impression. So in that sense I do think it affects. But I do think there are, there are two other Korean-Americans in the department, and I think they’re doing great. I mean, like they’ve succeeded very well and they’re able to, like, I admire their skills in being able to interact with other people and I feel like they’ve integrated very well. So, um, I feel like that’s probably just specific to me, but I also feel like, you know, if you bring any random Korean from Korea and bring him to

the States, the systems are very different, right. It's not just follow the rules. In America, you know, think of new ideas, promote them, you know like, show me how you're valuable to the system. Like show me how, and so that's different from like, your supervisor saying, here's the goal, you do it versus, like, so I feel like that's different. Like, that paradigm is different so in that sense it can unfairly, maybe you will be skipped over in a promotion because you didn't promote yourself. So in that way I think it's a disadvantage. Or it could be construed as racism but I don't think it's, I think it's inadvertent racism, I don't think it's truly racism.

Suki's narratives clearly show how cultural racism contributes to justifying racial inequality in a discursive level. In her closing remarks, Suki states that Korean Americans' lack of social skills can be a barrier to being promoted in the organizational ladder, which is not associated with "racism." The glass ceiling is attributable to individual merit, not to racial discrimination. Such a cultural racist discourse is further backed by an argumentative strategy. The Asian stereotypes, according to Suki, are applicable to herself, which is due to the unique upbringing practices among Asian (immigrant) families. Prior studies, as well as public media, have long reported the patriarchal and authoritarian childrearing practices of Asian immigrant families (Steinberg et al. 1992; Min 1998). This differential upbringing practice might shape their children's social skills, but the generalization of the family often leads respondents to ignore a huge heterogeneity in social skills among Asian immigrant children. Suki also acknowledges that some of other Korean American colleagues are socially competent but continues to generalize her assertion, including about herself.

It is interesting to note that Suki compares the organizational environments in the U.S. with those in Korea, seeking to justify her cultural arguments. This comparison implicitly assumes the cultural and organizational superiority of American society and reinforces the cultural argument. Suki's deficiency of creativeness and social skills, according to this comparison, not only results from her family but also from the cultural traits of the Korean society. Suki's narrative shows her internalization of the subordinate status of Asian Americans, as well as that of Korea.

The Asian occupationers employ two major storylines, co-ethnic othering and internalization to make sense of the cultural racism discourses. These argumentative strategies reflect my respondents' identificational adaptation to their racial position as a racial middle; they seek to maintain the relative benefits as a model minority and accept the group's inferiority compared to the mainstream whites.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examine my Korean American informants' discourses surrounding racial inequality in the labor market and their workplaces. I elaborate how these discourses are associated with their racial identities. I identify two discursive subgroups by occupation: the informants with Asian-clustered occupations, and informants with Asian-underrepresented occupations. These subgroups vary regarding their tendency to rationalize and acknowledge racial inequality in the labor market. A

critical discourse analysis reveals that the informants with Asian-clustered occupations are more likely than those with Asian-underrepresented occupations to employ the cultural racism discourses to rationalize and justify unequal treatments relative to Asian Americans. By contrast, informants with Asian-underrepresented occupations are less likely to employ racial ideological frames to report their opinions about unequal treatment. The findings suggest that occupational standings differentiate the social inclusion of Korean Americans, as well as their subjective racial identities. Since the Asian field of occupations fit with the racial expectation for Asian Americans, informants with Asian-clustered occupations tend to be treated more positively by the white mainstream and to identify with them. The informants with Asian-underrepresented occupations, however, are more likely to be excluded by white colleagues and more critical of the racial status quo. Although my respondents in general are highly educated and have middle-class occupations, their socioeconomic status does not guarantee the social inclusion; the assimilation of Korean Americans partly depends on occupational standings.

A further analysis on the discourses of informants with Asian-clustered occupations suggests that they utilize two main argumentative strategies to support the racist frames. By utilizing the storylines of co-ethnic othering and internalization, respondents in Asian-clustered occupations seek to endorse, and generalize, the cultural inferiority of Asian Americans and maintain their relative advantages as a successful

minority. The findings suggest that the informants with Asian-clustered occupations are more likely than those with Asian-underrepresented occupations to identify themselves with whites.

In the following chapter, I examine my Korean respondents' racial identities by analyzing their narratives surrounding subjective experiences with racism. I focus my analysis on how multiple factors complicate their racial identification.

## **6. Racial Identity and Within-Group Racial Stratification**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine the discourses surrounding individual experiences with racism by focusing on the association between these discourses and respondents' racial identities. Utilizing the critical discourse analysis, I elaborate on how being Asian American, neither white nor black, shapes their discourses and describe how multiple factors diversify their identities. I focus my analysis on two elements of racist discourses: styles and storylines. A discursive style, or a "semantic move," refers to a linguistic or rhetorical component of a discourse functioning to make sense of a narrative to listeners by rearticulating the relationship between propositions (Van Dijk 1987). A storyline, or an "argumentative schema," designates a argumentative tactic to rationalize one's argument (Wodak 1996). I specifically seek to answer the following questions. What kinds of discourses do grown children of Korean immigrants utilize to construct their experiences of racism? How do these discourses reflect their racial identities? What factors diversify the individuals' racial identities?

My Korean informants' narratives reveal that my they do not have homogeneous racial identities; they are diversified by gender and occupational standings. The respondents who are male or hold Asian-clustered occupations are more likely than others to have white-like identities. Also, the majority of the informants have an ambivalent racial identity that denies they are an "oppressed" minority while endorsing



the idea that they are non-white, which reflects their intermediate racial position. By identifying multiple factors in the construction of Asian Americans as racialized subjects, the findings illustrate the distinctive racialization pattern of Asian Americans, a pattern that is qualitatively different from other racial and ethnic groups.

## **6.2. Typology of Racial Identification**

Color-blind racism partially alleviates racial categorization and oppression, allowing stratification within and between racial minority groups to emerge (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Research suggests that internal stratification affects middle racial groups more than racial groups at the bottom of racial hierarchies. A discursive analysis of my respondents' narratives reveals three distinctive subgroups, the members of which deny, mitigate, and acknowledge the significance of experienced racism, respectively: honorary whites, racial intermediaries, and racial progressives. The discursive strategy of each subgroup represents its subjective racial position. A preliminary analysis suggests that gender and occupational standing partly contribute to the internal stratification; male respondents and those in the Asian-clustered occupations are more likely to have white-like identities, becoming honorary whites or racial intermediaries. Gender inequality may further complicate the racial hierarchy, with female racial minorities being treated worse than the male counterparts in society (Glenn 1999; Collins 1990; for Asian Americans, see Espiritu 2008). Those in the Asian-clustered occupations

have higher level of income and intend to more closely represent the racial stereotypes than those in the Asian-underrepresented occupations. Class and racial expectation likely contribute to within-group diversification (Lee 2004).

The largest segment of respondents (about 46%), termed as “*racial intermediaries*,” utilize discourses that minimize the impact of experienced racism. These respondents acknowledge that they have experienced at least one race-related incident; they utilize various but patterned expressions to downplay the influence of racism on their lives (O'Brien 2008; Dhingra 2003). Utilizing the discursive strategy, they attempt to dissociate with other racial minority groups who complain about racial inequality but acknowledge they have been the target of racism. This shared discursive practice signifies the racial intermediaries' racial identity as neither the dominant race nor the oppressed minority. In witnessing their experienced racisms and mistreatments, the racial intermediaries rarely use language that explicitly points to an experience's racial meaning. Some utilize non-racial terms, such as “incidents” or “mistreatments” for the incidents. They also refer to “prejudice” and “ignorance” but not racism (O'Brien 2008). This group mobilizes patterned discursive styles and storylines to minimize the significance of racial experiences, which the following sections analyze in detail. David, a native-born male aged 26, provides a typical case of racial intermediary:

Um, *the only time* I can think about are, I think, or *the only memory I have* is like, 'cause like, you know, how Korean food can be very strong smelling, and it's on

your clothes and then like going to school sometimes people would make fun of the smell and be like, so um, *I don't remember too much of that*, it happened every once in a while. [emphasis added]

In using minimizing phrases like “the only time,” “the only memory,” and “I don’t remember too much of that,” David downplays the frequency and psychological impact of his experience. These phrases, however, are contradicted when David describes incidents occurring “sometimes” or “once in a while,” each of which implies that David has experienced negative race-related incidents more than once.

The utilization of “absence discourse”<sup>7</sup> (Nelson 2013) characterizes the second group of respondents (about 17%), termed as “*honorary whites*.” Honorary whites claim that there have been no racial experiences in their lives. The discursive strategy of honorary whites reflects their full endorsement of color-blind racism and their successful symbolic dissociation with minority status, which signifies the subgroup’s white-like identification. About 40% of honorary whites utilize only the absence discourses, while the others also utilize minimization discourses to deny having a subjective experience with racism. A 27-year-old native-born, Peter provides an instance of the absence discourse. With regard to whether he experiences any unequal treatments as an Asian American in his workplace, Peter commented as follows:

---

<sup>7</sup> Nelson (2013) defines the absence discourse as a variant of the racism-minimization discourse, referring to a denial of the existence of racism. Korean informants, however, utilize it to support the racism-minimization discourse.

Well, you do not want to be well, I don't want to be labeled as like umm, a bad person, or like a trouble maker. I do not want that label. But I do not think it has anything to do with the fact that I am Asian or not, you know. Maybe I am just too trusting, you know at like, the managers despite the fact that I am Asian, or that I am Black, Indian or you know, whatever you are going to evaluate me as if am just a company employee. I really do believe in the blindness, in the color-blindness of corporate America. Maybe not in terms of upward mobility, like how quickly you get promoted, because like it is really about the level of talent and skill you bring to the firm from a corporate perspective. I do not think that it is particular to me being Asian American.

Peter's statement contains several discursive tactics to deny the existence of racism. Firstly, he describes members of racial minorities who report racism as "bad" people and "trouble maker[s]." Here Peter reflects the regulatory function<sup>8</sup> of racism against racial minorities (Essed 1991) and signifies the inferiority of minorities who do not share his point of view (Wodak 1996; Wodak 1997). By stressing his difference from other minorities, Peter attempts to identify himself with whites. The next sentences apply a semantic move toward apparent admission<sup>9</sup> (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000) by claiming that race does not matter in Peter's workplace, further dissociating him from minority status. Additionally, he mobilizes the meritocracy, or the racist frame of

---

<sup>8</sup> African Americans are often prohibited from explicitly arguing that they are victims of racism by whites who charge they are too sensitive or complaining (Essed 1991). This reflects color-blind racism's regulatory influence on minorities.

<sup>9</sup> In case of whites' racist discourses, they often "apparently admit" that there is racism in society not to look racist (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000). This semantic move, however, seeks to hide the actual meaning of their statement as a whole. In the case of my informants, however, the semantic move functions to deny that there is racism, which functions to hide the fact that they are racist victims.

abstract liberalism (Bonilla-Silva 2006), to rationalize his claim. This instance illustrates how the absence discourses of my respondents relate to white identification and denial of minority status.

The *racial progressives*, 11 respondents (about 16%), are qualitatively distinct from racial intermediaries and honorary whites. They utilize racially “correct” words and phrases, such as “racist,” “discrimination,” and “racism,” to describe their experiences with racism, without any discursive reservations. Racial progressives are aware of the significance of racism in their lives and symbolically refuse color-blind racism. These discursive characteristics reflect the racial progressives’ identification with other people of color. For instance, Grace, a 27-year-old woman born in the United States, recalled one of her earliest racial memories:

They [her high school peers] wouldn’t call me like Chink or whatever but they’d be like, “Oh that Asian girl, that Asian girl.” It was never like, “that girl.” It was like, “that Asian girl,” you know. So you know I don’t think that *racism* requires a sort of derogatory word, it’s all about actions and how people react to you. So anyway she wasn’t calling me Chink or like whatever, the fact that she was labeling me as an Asian girl, then, you know I see that as a different type of *racism*. It’s not as like blatantly obvious but it definitely a form of racism itself. [emphasis added]

Grace uses the word racism that racial intermediaries admit. She recognizes racists do not always use “derogatory” words or violence, that contemporary racism has a nuanced form (Bobo et al. 1997; Royster 2003). Grace recognized that labeling her “that Asian girl” signified her peers’ view of her as a subordinate race. Grace’s interpretation

of the incident as racism closely relates to her understanding of what being Asian means in society; Grace identifies herself as an oppressed racial minority.

Almost three times as many of my respondents were racial intermediaries than racial progressives. Racial intermediaries represent Korean Americans' racial identity as neither white nor black. By acknowledging the existence of racism and minimizing its influence on their lives at the same time, the group seeks to endorse their non-whiteness while dissociating from the label of "oppressed" minority.

### **6.3. Discourses of Racism-Minimization**

The majority (39) of my respondents employ racism-minimization discourses, which use linguistic/rhetorical and argumentative strategies to make sense of their discourses to listeners. A discourse analysis reveals that informants share several types of styles and storylines. As this section will describe, the styles allows informants to transmit their experiences with racism without sounding serious during the interviews (Bonilla-Silva 2006); this often includes references to the psychological impact of the incidents. Informants rationalize and justify their assertions through patterned narratives. These narratives more directly illustrate the ways in which informants represent the relationship of selves to the social world (Somers 1994).

### 6.3.1. Styles of Racism-Minimization

The dominant race uses the stylistic strategies, or semantic moves, to veil the racist meanings of the discourses (Van Dijk 1992; Van Dijk 1987). My informants employ similar semantic moves to a different end: to dissociate from the image of oppressed minorities. The racism-minimization discourses of my informants have three major styles: *frequency reducing*, *psychological distancing*, and *forgetting*. Eighteen respondents used frequency reducing, a stylistic strategy stressing that experiences with racism are not frequent, though they may have been once (O'Brien 2008). Sora is a 33-year-old woman born in the United States. When asked of whether she has any memory of racism in childhood, Sora uses the style of frequency reducing to describe her racial experiences:

Um, uh, when I, when I lived in the city, in [Name of city], you know like, the neighborhood kids would, like, make fun of me. But *it didn't happen a lot*, you know, *it didn't happen that often* so I only have like *one or two* memories, and it bothered me but it didn't [happen a lot] [Interviewer: How did it bother you?] Um, well, you know, they would say like, "Ching Chong," and in my mind I would think, "Why are you calling me that, I'm not Chinese." You know, so in my mind we were separate. [emphasis added]

Sora plainly reports the existence of racial incidents but quickly stresses they were infrequent. The semantic move of frequency reducing ("it didn't happen a lot") functions to mitigate the significance of racial incidents on the subject. Instead of veiling her psychological suffering, Sora chooses to minimize the frequency of racial incidents

in order to signal their triviality. Other respondents used frequency reducing by saying “the only time,” “not too many,” or “it’s not common.” Sora also seeks to distance herself from “Chinese” who are the target of the derogatory words, identifying herself as a non-oppressed racial minority.

The second style of psychological distancing downplays the psychological impact of racism (O'Brien 2008), more informants, 19, used this discursive strategy than any other. Informants using this style typically say “Whatever,” “I didn’t care,” or “it doesn’t bother me.” Psychological distancing performs two main functions in respondents’ discourses. Some use it to suggest that an incident of racial bias has no significance. For instance, when asked whether he had recently experienced any racism, Sung, a native-born 23-year-old man, states, “I mean all the time. I could walk into a club in New York City and they say, ‘Ching Chong Wong, you get out of line,’ you know. And, *whatever, whatever* [emphasis added].” More frequently, my respondents attempt to signify that nothing intentionally racist occurred. Tim, a 52-year-old male who immigrated aged 12, is a typical example. When asked about his racial memories, he describes his high schools memories like this:

Well I, I don’t think there was any positive episodes, you know. I was the only Asian in my uh, junior high school, um, and uh, there was some, some uh, prejudice in high school, in high school. But I was, you know, very assimilated into the community at school but you know, I had lots of friends and but there were a few isolated incidents of racism. [Interviewer: Like what kind of?] It was mostly, you know, oh, name calling. *Nothing uh, nothing too serious.* But I was, *I didn’t feel like I*



*was discriminated because I was uh, Asian.* (Interviewer: But because of what?) But there's always some, some, some kids who are going to make fun of you *but it didn't uh, affect my life* in really any significant way. [emphasis added]

Tim's response includes a semantic move of apparent admission (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000), which he mitigates by a discursive style of frequency reducing ("there was a few isolated incidents"). He describes his status as white-like. When pushed to explain further, he emphasizes the rhetorical moves of psychological distancing. Tim denies both the racial intentionality ("I didn't feel like I was discriminated") and the psychological impact ("It didn't affect my life") of the incidents.

Eleven respondents employed forgetting as a rhetorical strategy. These respondents acknowledge the existence of racial incidents but say they cannot recall any details about them. Forgetting is distinct from denial of racism (Van Dijk 1992; Nelson 2013) because it occupies an ambivalent middle ground between acknowledgement and denial. A 41-year-old male born in the United States, Todd provides a typical case. In response to a question about any racial memory, he says this:

Um, [pause] in my recollection, maybe some teasing or something here and there but, it wasn't, *I didn't recall any very negative.* I mean...maybe...some older like black kids or white kids calling Asian kids, you know...like...kind of...negative Chink or something like that [light laughter] but *I don't recall any kind of racial tensions or things like that.* You know, I had African-American teachers, Caucasian teachers and all these different. We all got along. I remember...you know...our classroom was very diverse and I think we got along very well. [emphasis added]

The interview question makes no direct request for negative or oppressive memories; Todd assumes that anything racial must be discriminatory. He follows vague descriptions of racial memories with a semantic move of forgetting, downplaying the seriousness of experienced incidents. He also employs psychological distancing in relation to those incidents he does recall. He also uses topic avoidance<sup>10</sup> (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000), moving his focus into the diversity of his school setting, by which he seeks to avoid further describing his racial memories.

Many informants do not use these linguistic and rhetorical components separately. They mobilize more than one style to downplay the impact of their experiences with racism. However, this is not to suggest that those who downplay the experienced racism actually encountered less racism than others did. Instead, these discursive styles reflect shared ideologies among my respondents (Nelson 2013).

### **6.3.2. Storylines of Racism-Minimization**

In addition to the several linguistic and rhetorical components, my respondents utilized certain patterned narratives, or argumentative schemata, to rationalize and justify their arguments (Van Dijk 1992). Thirty-two, or about 85% of the respondents who minimize experienced racism utilize the discursive styles, while 21, about 55%

---

<sup>10</sup> Whites utilize this style to shift their arguments from an explicit racist topic to a more ambivalent one (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000). By this, they seek to hide their racist meanings in their statements. In the case of my respondents, by contrast, they use the topic avoidance to conceal being a target of racism.

apply the storylines. Respondents share four distinctive forms of storylines:

*individualization, relativization, othering co-ethnics, and relative valorization.*

Individualization, which Jacqueline K. Nelson calls “deflection from the mainstream” (2013), attributes racism and discrimination to deviant individuals (O’Brien 2008). Nine respondents utilize this narrative strategy. They describe the offenders of the racist incidents as “ignorant,” “stupid,” or “uneducated,” and thereby imply they deviate from the norm. People in a subset of this group completely sever this deviation from the significance of race. Esther is a 44-year-old woman who came to the United States when aged 4. She was made fun of “a lot” because she was the only Asian in her elementary school for her entire tenure. When asked about any recent mistreatments, Esther recalled one episode when a man mistreated her:

I mean, definitely like, people would make fun of me when I was little. But nowadays I can’t, just you know, I gave you that one example of those people being rude. *But to me I was like, they’re very, like not well educated people. But, I can’t really think of any concrete example recently other than that, you know, not of someone in an official capacity.* I mean, don’t get me wrong, I get annoyed and like about something but *I don’t think it has anything to do with my ethnicity.* [laughter] [emphasis added]

Esther seeks to trivialize her recent experience with racism by contrast with the past when racism was more frequent, an argumentative frame of temporal deflection<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> In a study about racial minorities in Australia, Nelson (2013) shows that they tend to minimize the significance of current racism by stating that racism in Australia was more prevalent in the past than now.

(Nelson 2013). Labelling the offenders as “not well educated people” and “not of someone in an official capacity” mobilizes the individualization storyline. These two storylines contribute to supporting her claim that the incidents are not related to structural racism. Esther’s refusal to relate the incidents to her “ethnicity” also reflects a discursive detachment of herself from the image of an oppressed race.

The second storyline of relativization is an ambivalent narrative strategy that acknowledges the ongoing existence of racism but denies its pervasiveness. Eight respondents, about 20%, utilized this strategy. Unlike the storyline of spatial deflection stressing regional differences (Nelson 2013; Fozdar 2008), the relativization narrative suggests racism occurs only in certain regions, in certain industries, or with certain people. By stressing the endemic character of racism, the informants who use this storyline minimize the impact of racism on themselves. One example is the narrative of Sung. Sung mobilizes the relativization storyline, with the individualization storyline, to explain why he currently does not feel any racism. “You’ll always find racism, just different severities. But in New York I don’t feel it. I don’t really feel it. They’ll say like Ching Chong Wong but, you know it’s because they don’t have a job, like they have no life that’s why. I just dismiss it.” Heesu, a woman aged 32 who came to the United States when aged one, provides another instance. Unlike Sung, whose storyline utilizes regional difference in the racist environment, the relativization storyline Heesu uses

relies on physical differences that reflect racial stereotypes of Asian women. When asked if she has been treated differently at her workplace, Heesu utilizes the storyline:

I haven't been because, I know, *I haven't been because I'm taller, so like in my old firm, which is a bigger firm but it was more corporate like we had really, really big clients and stuff and so people were, had a different mindset. Some of my Asian friends who are girls, who are smaller, like very short and very little, and you know we look younger; they didn't get treated very well. Um, they got treated like, the secretaries would think they were secretaries because they were so young. And they would be like six year associates, you know, and they secretary would be like here make copies. And she would be like, I'm a sixth year associate. You're the secretary, you make the, you know. And then also, um, uh, like there were a lot of instances where some partners would call the girls by other girl's names, like they wouldn't remember the girl's names and if we had been another race that would never happen. But for me like, that never happens to me because I'm tall so I think I am taller and I'm bigger so people tend to remember me more because I don't look like [an Asian girl]. So I've never experienced it but I know my friends have, like a lot. [emphasis added]*

The argumentative schema of relativization in Heesu's statement not only functions to justify her assertion of not being discriminated against, but also produces a discursive distinction between herself and other Asian women (Wodak 1996; Wodak 1997). This discursive distinction contributes to reproducing, and generalizing, the racialized image of Asian female (Pyke and Johnson 2003). Although Heesu criticizes unequal treatments that her friends experience, she attributes racism to the "typical" Asian image rather than being Asian itself.

Respondents used two other storylines of co-ethnic othering and relative valorization that correspond with a discourse of difference that seeks to preserve white

privilege by discursively distinguishing “normal” whites from “deviant” minorities (Wodak 1996; Wodak 1997). My informants, however, mobilize the discourse of difference to preserve their intermediate position by othering the oppressed minorities or other co-ethnics. Co-ethnic othering, which five racial intermediaries (about 13%) used, also reflects defensive othering among the socially subordinate groups and thereby allows them to passively resist negative labeling by the mainstream (Schwalbe et al. 2000; Pyke and Dang 2003). Joe, a 41-year-old man who immigrated at the age of two, provides a typical example. While he recounted incidents of racism when he was in elementary school, he claims that during junior high and high school, classmates and teachers treated him equally due to his “perfect” English.

They [my teachers] accepted me a hundred percent, you know, now I wonder though, and this is maybe again, my English was perfect. But I wonder how they would treat someone with a, with an accent, you know, because even to this day, people with accents get treated different than those who don't have accents. It still happens, you know, whether it be in government, whether it be in um, uh, retail industry or whatever, they're treated differently. So I don't know had my, had I had an accent growing up in school maybe they would've treated me differently. But since I had no accent, you know, because I spoke just like any other White or Black guy, there was no, there was never any, any issues. But if I spoke with thick accent, oh what you, you know, maybe they would've treated me differently, I don't know. I don't know, I can't say, but I never had any issues. [emphasis added]

The storyline of co-ethnic othering functions to reduce racism to a problem of foreigners or immigrants by claiming certain Asians who have a “thick accent” experience racism. Joe discursively distances himself from the image that Asian

Americans are unassimilable foreigners (Tuan 1998; Kim 1999). As a second-generation Korean American, Joe also distances himself from first- and 1.5-generation Korean Americans who he regards as having a more “typical” Asian image, seeking to identify himself with “Americans” (Pyke and Dang 2003).

Only four respondents use what Claire Jean Kim (1999) calls relative valorization. Through the storyline informants downplay the significance of their experienced racism by emphasizing the worse discrimination that other racial groups face (O'Brien 2008). Informants compare their own experiences to the ones they imagine African Americans, Latinos, and “Muslims” experience. These informants conceive of their social standing as better than darker-skinned races, without entirely denying their own experience of racial mistreatment. Andrew is a 35-year-old, native-born man. When asked of whether he currently faces any unequal treatments as a Korean American, Andrew makes this statement:

Not that much. Not that much. Uh... Yeah, especially I stopped working for my parents, at my other jobs, I rarely ever experience any kind of racial mistreatment or discrimination. Every so often but not regularly. Usually it's like a crazy person or a drunk person who says something “Ching Chong” or something. But it is very very rare. In New York, very rarely. Even in my neighborhood. Even though I am the, one of the only Asian who lives in my neighborhood. My neighbors are pretty nice to me, you know. They are accepting. Um... I feel like, I feel like New York is so diverse. *But you know, I know there are still racial discriminations here. I feel like a lot of the Muslim people in New York get mistreated here, especially after September 11th.* [emphasis added]

Andrew's response includes a style of frequency reducing ("not that much," "every so often but not regularly") to transmit his narrative without seriousness. Andrew uses a number of argumentative frames, such as individualization ("a crazy person or a drunk person") and relativization ("in New York, very rarely"), to mitigate the significance of his racial experiences. He follows a semantic move of apparent admission ("I know there are still racial discriminations here"), which he minimizes by an argumentative frame of relative valorization. Andrew mitigates the significance of his experiences by stating that the Muslims are treated worse, which signifies his better position in the racial ladder.

Respondents articulate their ambivalence about their racial identity through four argumentative storylines. By acknowledging the existence of experienced racism, respondents endorse their minority status and, at the same time, attempt to distance themselves from identification as problem minorities and foreigners by using the patterned narratives.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter, drawing upon the narratives surrounding my respondents' individual experiences of racism, I examine the association of the discourses with the group's racial position. The informants do not have homogeneous racial identities but fall into three discursive subgroups: honorary whites, racial intermediaries, and racial



progressives. These groups vary in their tendency to deny, minimize, and acknowledge the significance of experienced racism. Honorary whites and racial progressives represent white-like and oppressed-minority identities respectively. Informants who are male or hold Asian-clustered occupations are more likely than others to have white-like identities. A critical discourse analysis reveals that racial intermediaries, the largest subgroup, employs a discourse minimizing racism, which reflects the ambivalent racial identities with which they deny oppressed minority status and simultaneously endorse their non-whiteness. Findings suggest that the identificational ambivalence among Korean Americans reflects the group's intermediate racial position.

In the next chapter, I summarize the findings of my research and discuss their contribution to the sociological literature.

## 7. Conclusion

They [Asian Americans] think power is only defined by merit, meaning you work hard you get good grades, you are a good citizen. That's *merit*, and America is founded on that idea of merit. Right, so if you, don't care who you are, I don't care what class you are, I don't care what family you were born into that's European old style, here, I don't care. And that's largely true. Um, but there is [pause] another element to American power that Asian Americans in particular are unfamiliar with and that's narrative. [Interviewer: What do you mean by narrative?] When I say narrative I mean who, whoever controls the story has power. That's what I mean by narrative. So Asian Americans think, "I can break through, whoever controlling the story doesn't matter because I'm a doctor." That doesn't change the story though. [emphasis original]

Emil, a 40-year-old male journalist

In this study, I examine the lived experiences of economic and social incorporation of Korean Americans. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with grown children of Korean immigrants, I elaborate how the structural position of Korean Americans as an intermediate race shapes the incorporation process and the identity formation (Chapter 2). The distinctive adaptation experiences and identity construction of my respondents are analyzed specifically focusing on parental socialization (Chapter 3), the variation across community contexts (Chapter 4), the differentiation by occupational standings (Chapter 5), and subjective understanding of racism (Chapter 6). These findings highlight how factors such as race, community, and occupational standing differentiate the modes of racial exclusion/inclusion. This differentiation reflects the racial position of Korean Americans located between whites and blacks, as

well as the ongoing significance of race in the life chances of Korean Americans. By identifying multiple factors in the construction of Asian Americans as racialized subjects, I illustrate the distinctive racialization pattern of a group of Korean Americans, a pattern that is qualitatively different from other people of color.

In this chapter, I revisit the empirical findings of the research to rearticulate their key arguments and further discuss the contributions and implications in the larger sociological context. I also briefly discuss the limitations of the research and further research agenda.

### ***7.1. Diversified Paths to Incorporation***

How does being Korean American shape the adaptational experiences of grown children of Korean immigrants? To answer this question, I introduce the tri-racial perspective that places Asian Americans between whites and blacks and elaborates how the conception of an intermediate race provides a better understanding of the adaptation experiences of my Korean respondents (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3, I examine parental socialization experiences of my Korean American respondents. Their retrospective narratives reveal that their parents' class backgrounds moderate the impact of ethnic resources on parental expectations for children's mobility and shape their perceived marginality. The imbalance between a relatively high class background and socially marginalized status, which characterizes the Korean families from middle-class

backgrounds in Korea, leads them to be preoccupied with mobility outcomes. Economic success of the children is often equated with status elevation in the community and with overcoming social marginality as non-white immigrants. This situated idea of status elevation, however, reflects the influence of the group's racially subordinated status and the distinctive formation of their understanding of race. Lower expectations of children characterize the families from lower-class backgrounds. Their unstable economic situation prevents them from socializing the children to aspire for success, as well as from benefiting from their ethnic community. The comparison by class suggests that high aspirations for success and ignorance of racial inequality among Korean Americans are a function of class backgrounds, rather than of ethnic values.

Chapter 4 explores divergent adaptation experiences by community context. The retrospective narratives of my Korean informants on childhood and adolescence reveal that their adaptational experiences are not unidirectional, as predicted by the assimilation perspective (Portes and Zhou 1993), but are diversified by the racial composition of the communities. Korean informants from white-dominated communities are likely to be forced to assimilate as racially subordinated subjects, while those from racially diverse communities experience relatively equal treatments but are likely incorporated as culturally inferior subjects. The comparison by community context highlights the differentiated but ongoing influence of racial subordination of Korean Americans.

Chapter 5 examines the diversity in experienced incorporation by occupational standing. A discourse analysis on the narratives of labor market inequality suggests that occupational standings differentiate the experienced inclusion of Korean Americans. Since Asian-clustered occupations fit with the racial expectation of Asian Americans, the Korean informants in Asian-clustered occupations tend to be treated more positively by the white mainstream and, thus, identify themselves with whites. People in other occupations, however, are more likely to be excluded by whites and more critical of the racial status quo. The findings suggest that although all of my respondents are highly educated and have middle-class occupations, their socioeconomic status does not guarantee a full level of social inclusion; the assimilation of Korean Americans partly depends on occupational standings.

First, the findings suggest multiple pathways to integration into the American society among immigrant children. Although many sociological studies have attempted to capture diversified paths to incorporation among the post-1965 immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), they often assume that there are two binary destinations of integration for immigrants and their children: the (white) mainstream and (black) underclass (Jung 2009). Asian Americans are assumed to be incorporated into the white mainstream through class elevation. Moreover, the literature treats Asian Americans as one monolithic group, which leads researchers to ignore variations within the group, for instance, by countries of origin, class backgrounds, and immigration contexts (Kim

2008a). The triracial perspective, however, predicts that the distinctive racialization of Asian Americans, economically inclusive but socially exclusive, allows multiple factors to complicate the group's adaptation processes (Bonilla-Silva 2002). My empirical findings also show that factors such as class, community contexts, and occupations, differentiate the modes of social incorporation among grown children of Korean immigrants. Corresponding with recent studies that highlight diversified incorporation experiences within one racial/ethnic group (Zhou et al. 2008), these findings contribute to the existing literature by identifying multiple pathways to social incorporation.

Second, the findings provide additional insight into local dynamics of assimilation. Assimilation theories often assume a normative conception of immigrant incorporation—socioeconomic mobility through educational achievement (Alba and Nee 2003). However, minority individuals' orientations for assimilation are not always to become white middle-class, but depend on a variety of constraints and possibilities that they experience in local contexts (Zhou and Lee 2007). In various social domains, such as neighborhood, religion, school, and workplaces, non-white minority children face distinctive inclusive and exclusive treatments, which lead them to form different ideas of where they seek to belong. My findings also reveal that my Korean informants have distinctive ideas of "assimilation" in different contexts, such as in the family, local communities, and the labor market. This reconceptualization of assimilation as reflecting

local dynamics contributes to the literature by identifying various ways that local contexts shape minority individuals' meanings and motivations for social incorporation.

Third, my findings also suggest the ongoing impact of race on the lives of Korean Americans. Color-blind racism has allowed a significant level of upward mobility of people of color; however, class elevation does not terminate the impact of race on their lives. Rather, elevated class status allows for a racialized form of social inclusion (Dhingra 2007). Korean Americans are allowed to be incorporated into the white mainstream only when they fit with and acknowledge the racialized image of Asians, as seen in the case of the Korean informants in Asian-clustered occupations. This racialized inclusion of Korean Americans suggests re-considering the notion of acculturation. Acculturation includes not only acquiring language fluency, cultural norms and values, and formal education, but also the racial norms and values of the dominant race (Bow 2010). The full inclusion into the white mainstream requires Korean Americans to be acculturated into white racial norms, in other words, to be racialized as an inferior racial subject. The racialized inclusion of a certain segment of Korean Americans by class elevation in turn contributes to the reproduction of the existing racial status quo, rather than the advance to racial equality.

## ***7.2. What Does It Mean to Be Korean American?***

How does being Korean American shape self-understanding relative to race? To answer the question, Chapter 6 examines diversified racial identification and its relation to the group's racial position. I identify three discursive subgroups: honorary whites, racial intermediaries, and racial progressives. These groups vary regarding their tendency to deny, minimize, and acknowledge the significance of experienced racism. Honorary whites and racial progressives represent white-like and oppressed-minority identities respectively. A critical discourse analysis suggests that racial intermediaries, the largest subgroup, employ a discourse minimizing racism, which reflects the ambivalent racial identities with which they deny oppressed minority status and simultaneously endorse their non-whiteness. Findings suggest the close association of identificational ambivalence with the racial intermediacy.

First, the findings contribute to the largely theoretical literature on the tri-racial stratification system by providing unique empirical evidence and a fresh theoretical implication. Scholarly concern about the emergence of an intermediate race is still nascent and controversial. Most of the literature either remains theoretical (Bonilla-Silva 2002; Kim 1999) or documents society's perception, rather than that of members of the group itself (Kim 2000; Xu and Lee 2013). I investigated what it means to be a racial middle among Korean Americans by focusing on the subjective racial identification. The findings reveal the distinct discursive characteristic of a racial middle group and the



subtle social process by which the group's structural location shapes the majority of respondents' experience of racism. The findings also illustrate unique discursive structures among the subordinate race. Much of literature documents the discursive structures of the privileged race; scholars have generally ignored how racial ideology works among the subordinate (for instance, Bonilla-Silva 2006; Van Dijk 1992; Wetherell and Potter 1992; for exception, Essed 1991). Rather, I present the ways in which racial minorities employ racist frames through discursive styles and storylines, which is significantly distinctive from those of whites.

Second, the internal variation in discursive strategy, as I found, confirms the emergence of within-group racial stratification (Bonilla-Silva 2002), rather than the static, homogeneous racialization of Asian Americans (Kim 1999). The emergent internal stratification among my Korean American respondents suggests that multiple factors complicate, rather than replace, the racial hierarchy among Korean Americans, as well as Asian Americans. However, the findings counter the argument that Asian Americans are being whitened (for instance, Lee and Bean 2004; Yancey 2003). The majority of my Korean respondents (about 81%) report experiencing racism-related incidents at least one time during their lives, which indicates that American society still treats them as a subordinate race. While a small segment of respondents, the honorary whites, develop white-like identities, aided by their gender and class advantages, the remaining majority fail to identify themselves as whites. Given the overall class characteristics of my

upwardly mobile sample, this majority can only experience this inability to assimilate because of their Asian background.

Since the sample for this research only includes Korean Americans, further research is needed for other Asian American populations. The tri-racial perspective predicts that darker-skinned, lower-class Asian Americans, including Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Hmong, are likely to fall into the “collective black” over time (Bonilla-Silva 2002). To examine these groups’ incorporation experiences and racial identities is crucial to investigate internal stratification among Asian subgroups. Additionally, further examination for downwardly-mobile Korean American populations is necessary to draw the entire picture of second-generation Korean Americans’ adaptation experiences. Downwardly-mobile Korean Americans might experience harsher unequal treatments from whites, as well as co-ethnics, and hold more affinity toward blacks, becoming collective blacks (Lee 1996; Lee 2004). Despite these limitations, this study advances the existing immigration and race literature by providing unique empirical accounts of a racial group underrepresented in scholarship.

## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this study. Remember that your involvement in this interview is completely voluntary and that you can decline to answer a question or even end the interview if you choose to do so. However, also keep in mind that every effort will be made to keep your identity confidential. I am interested in learning about the experiences of Korean Americans, and I really appreciate you spending some time to chat with me about your own experiences.

A. Demographic Information: Would you mind if I start out by asking you some questions about who you are?

1. When and where were you born? (Month/Year)
  - (If born in Korea) when did you come to the U.S.?
2. How many siblings do you have?
3. Are you married and how many children do you have?
4. What is the highest degree you, father, and mother, have received?

B. Neighborhood Information

1. Can you very briefly describe where you grew up (6-14 yrs.)?
  - PROBE: Rural/urban, inner city/suburb, big town/small town
2. What kind of people lived in your neighborhood? Did you and your family often interact with them? How did you feel about them?
  - PROBE: Do you have any **racial memory** about it?
3. Could you describe the ethnic background of the neighborhood where you live now?
4. Do you often interact with your neighbors?
  - (If so) What type of things do you do with your neighbors?

C. Family and community relation: Would you mind if we talk about your family?

1. Can you tell me about your parents' history of immigration?
  - PROBE: Parental education and jobs in Korea, motivation for immigration
2. When you were young, what did your parents do for a living?
  - PROBE: Were you embarrassed or proud of your parents' work?
  - PROBE: Did you feel your parents' business was a success?
3. Have you ever helped out at your parents' work?
  - (If yes): How often and how long did you help them?
4. Was Korean usually spoken at home?
  - PROBE: Who mainly spoke Korean (including Rs)?
5. How can you characterize your parents? Did they discipline (authoritarian), give you a lot of freedom (permissive), or encourage open communication (authoritative)?
  - PROBE: Could you tell me some examples?
6. If the society is divided into upper class, upper-middle class, middle class, middle-lower class, and lower class, which one do you think your family belonged to when you were 16? Why do you think so?
7. Growing up, do you remember hearing anyone in your family talking about expectations for you as a Korean?
  - (If yes): Could you explain to any specific examples of things that were discussed?
8. What were the expectations your family had of you regarding schooling, college, and future career?
  - PROBE: What pressure did your parents put to you? How did you react to them?
9. Do you remember hearing anyone in your family talking about race and racial issues?

- (If yes): Could you explain to any specific examples of things that were discussed?
  - (If no): What do you think are the reasons your family did not share these experiences?
10. Do you remember hearing anyone in your family talking about any disadvantages of Korean Americans in society?
  11. [Female] What were the expectations your parents had of you as a woman regarding schooling and career?
  12. [Female] What kind of role and behaviors were expected to you as a woman in your family?
  13. [For women, if have siblings] What do you think the difference in the expectations for you and your brother of your parents?
  14. What do you think are the main differences in how men and women are raised in the Korean family and community? What are your thoughts on these differences?
  15. Have you had any conflict of opinion with family members, especially regarding schooling or future careers?
  16. What do you think is the main difference between your family and American families in terms of raising children?
  17. In your family, who made decisions about housekeeping, schooling, or moving?
  18. Back then, did your parents often interact with their friends and relatives, for example, inviting them or visiting their homes?
    - PROBE: did you have any chance to talk with them? What did they tell you?
  19. Have you ever attended any Korean churches or ethnic organizations regularly?

- (If yes) What is your good or bad memory about it? What do you think it influenced your later lives?

D. School Life (6-12<sup>th</sup> grades): Now I want to know about your experiences in middle and high school.

1. Can you tell me the kind of schools you attended?
  - PROBE: Public/private, large/small, inner city/suburb
2. Can you tell me the kind of students in the schools that you attended?
  - PROBE: racial and class makeup
3. What was your friendship like? What kinds of friends did you hang out with?
  - PROBE: their class and racial background
  - PROBE (for each co-/different ethnic): Could you describe this/these friendship(s), like what type of things you do together and what things you like to talk about?
  - PROBE: Was your friendship with KAs different from different ethnic friends?
4. How were peers grouped? Which group were you in?
5. What was school like for you? Did you feel that you were accepted?
6. Back then, if you had had a choice of what you wanted, what did you want to do in terms of education and job?
7. Back then, what did you actually expect that you could do in terms of education and job?
8. Growing up, did you have any role model regarding schooling or future career?
9. In addition to the school, from whom did you get information about college?
10. How involved were your parents in your schooling?

- PROBE: What kind of help did your parents provide you with?  
(financial, material, or direct teaching, summer school)
  - PROBE: Who (father or mother) usually helped you?
11. How involved were your parents in college preparation (preparing the list of schools, campus visits, essay writing, and overall strategizing)?
  12. Did teachers or peers ever treat you differently from other students in good or bad ways because you're a Korean American?
    - (If yes) Can you tell me some examples?
- E. College Life: Now I want to know about your experiences in college.
1. What kind of college did you attend?
    - PROBE: public/private, urban/rural, class and racial makeup
  2. What was your friendship like in college? What kinds of friends did you hang out with?
    - (If yes) PROBE: class and racial makeup and majors
    - (If yes) PROBE (for each co-/different ethnics): Could you describe this/these friendship(s), like what type of things you do together and what things you like to talk about?
  3. Have you taken classes, social activities, organizations in which minorities were rare? How was it?
  4. Had you sought help when you realized you were performing poorly?
  5. How often did you participate in class discussions and office hours?
  6. Have you ever participated in any student associations?
    - (If yes) What activities did you do?
  7. Did you participate in any job-related activities or part-time work?
  8. What was your experience in choosing your major?
    - PROBE: Who did you get information from? Was there anyone who was influential to decide a major?

- PROBE: What was the important motivation in deciding your major?  
(preference, money, security)
- F. Work Experience: Now I want to know about your experiences at work.
1. What kind of jobs have you had in life?
  2. What was your experience in choosing your current job? What factors came into play when choosing?
    - PROBE: Using personal networks/open recruitment, advisement/personal recommendation
  3. What factors do you think were important in choosing your current job?
    - PROBE: location, security, promotion, and salary.
  4. During the process of getting your current job, how many people helped you?
    - (If there was no one) why didn't you get help from others?
  5. How did your family think of your work?
  6. What is the racial makeup of your place of work?
  7. Do you think you fit in at the workplace?
    - PROBE: why do you think so? Can you explain to any specific examples?
  8. What are your relationships with co-workers and supervisors like?
  9. Do you think that your career experiences are similar to or different from other Korean Americans (other Americans)?
  10. What is the stereotype of Korean Americans at work? Have you ever had this kind of experiences?
  11. Have you ever treated differently from other colleagues at work because you're Korean American?
  12. [For women] What role or behaviors are expected to you at work as a (Korean American) woman?



13. [For women] What do you think are problems that women face in employment or at work?
14. Between your educational background and social networks what you do think was more important to get your current job?
15. Have someone mentioned job possibilities, opening or opportunities to you, without you asking, in casual conversations?
  - (If so) Who was it? What information did s/he offer? Why did/did not you accept it?
16. Do you think social networks are influential to get ahead in America?
  - PROBE: Do you think your ethnicity have an impact on building the networks?
17. Do you think being Korean American affect being evaluated as an employee?
18. Among your close friends or relatives, who do you think have similar jobs?
  - (if yes) What do you think makes you and them similar?
  - (if not) What do you think makes you and them different?
19. Are you satisfied with your current job? Why is that?
20. Do you think it is important to work in an environment with persons like yourself?
21. Do you think the recent economic recession has affected the lives of your family and friends?

G. Friendship/Romantic Life / Identity

1. What percentages of your current close friends are co-ethnics?
  - (If other ethnics): Could you describe this/these friendship(s), like what type of things you do together and what things do you like to talk about?
  - PROBE: how did you get to know them?

2. Can you briefly review for me your romantic life from high school until today?
  - (If other ethnics) did you have any problems because of the race of your girlfriend/boyfriend?
  - (If co-ethnics) What do you think you were attracted to co-ethnics? Have you ever had any romantic interest in other ethnics?
3. (If you were single,) what would you think about marrying KKs, KAs, Asian Americans, Blacks, Latinos, or whites?
4. How do you define your economic status? What do you think your class matters to your life?
5. How do you define your ethnicity? What do you think your ethnicity matters to your life?
6. How do you define your race? What do you think your race matters to your life?
7. What do you think is the difference between Korean Americans in NY and Korean Americans in other states?
8. Where do you prefer to live? And why is that?

#### H. Korean Culture and Identity

1. Do you often access to things related to Korea through the Internet?
  - PROBE: Absolute time? % out of total amount of time on the Internet?
2. Which websites do you visit most? For what reasons do you visit Korea-related websites?
3. Do you often enjoy K-pops or Korean soap operas?
  - (If so) Why do you prefer them to American music or soap operas?
  - (If so) Who introduced them to you first? Who do you share them with?
4. Who do you usually communicate with on the Internet?
  - How often do you communicate with Koreans or Korean Americans?

- For what reasons do you communicate with them?
  - 5. Do you think the communication or information from the Internet affect you to think of Korea?
  - 6. Have you ever thought of getting a job or residing for some years in Korea? Why? How do you get information for job?
  - 7. Do you think your identity as Korean American has been influenced by the growing visibility and positive image of South Korea in the world scene?
    - PROBE: How do you feel about the Hallyu, the Korean wave in popular culture?
    - What do you think the impact of Hallyu on Korean American young adults' community? (Their identity, pride, or interaction with other Koreans and non-Koreans)
  - 8. How interested are you in South Korean society and politics? Why/why not?
  - 9. Do you think the Korean government should do something for the Korean American community?
- I. Generic Questions
1. Do you feel your career is a success?
  2. What do you think the Korean American community defines success?
  3. What do you think many Korean Americans work in science, medicine, or engineer fields?
  4. Among the followings what activities are important to your future?
    - 1) Having lots of money, 2) Getting recognition from work, 3) Having a family, 4) Spending time with family, 5) Working to correct social and political inequalities, 6) Helping the community (which community would you like to help?)
  5. [Double Consciousness]

- Do you think that American society is divided into social groups in any way? Why do you think so?
  - Are you for or against affirmative action? Do you think that affirmative action is unfair to Korean Americans?
  - Some people say that some minorities are worse off than whites because they lack motivation, are lazy, or do not have the proper values to succeed in our society. What do you think?
  - Do you think that being white is an advantage or disadvantage in contemporary America? Why do you think so?
6. Do you often talk about racial issues with others? If so, who have you talked with? What issues has been talked?
  7. Is it a common occurrence for people to ask or comment on your ethnic background? Can you recall the last time someone asked or commented on it? How do you respond?
  8. Overall, do you feel that there are race problems in the U.S. relative to Korean Americans? Which group or groups would you say face(s) discrimination now?
  9. Are there certain ethnic groups you feel are close/similar to being Korean? If so, which ones, and why? Are there other groups you feel you would have a harder time identifying with? If so, which ones, and why?
  10. How much is your income?
  11. Is there anything else you would like to mention or talk about – maybe something you feel is important but that I didn't think to ask you about?

## Appendix B. Respondents' Information

	Respondents (Pseudonym)	Gender	Place of Residence	Age	Gene- ration	Occupation
1	John	Male	DC	28	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Financial analyst
2	Jacquelyn	Female	DC	25	2 <sup>nd</sup>	College Administrator
3	Paul	Male	DC	28	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Government Administrator
4	Joe	Male	DC	41	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Computer Specialist
5	Peter	Male	DC	27	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Manager
6	Sunny	Female	NC	24	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Optometric technician
7	Eugene	Male	DC	45	1.5	Government Administrator
8	Daniel	Male	DC	36	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Government Administrator
9	Matthew	Male	DC	36	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Engineer
10	Mark	Male	DC	46	1.5	Financial analyst
11	Hannah	Female	DC	31	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Financial analyst
12	Sarah	Female	NY	30	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Sales manager
13	Sung	Male	NY	23	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Clerical Worker
14	Ashely	Female	NY	35	1.5	Designer
15	Eunice	Female	NY	24	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Clerical Worker
16	Rachel	Female	NY	27	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Designer
17	Michelle	Female	NY	24	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Financial analyst
18	Richard	Male	NY	39	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Manager
19	Angela	Female	NY	34	1.5	Manager
20	Brian	Male	NY	32	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Accountant
21	Andrew	Male	NY	35	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Freelance editor
22	Jane	Female	NY	27	1.5	lawyer
23	Joanne	Female	NY	24	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Teacher
24	Catherine	Female	NY	32	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Nurse
25	James	Male	NY	24	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Manager
26	Christian	Male	NY	24	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Financial analyst
27	Taehan	Male	DC	49	1.5	Professor
28	Todd	Male	DC	41	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Social scientist

29	Sukhee	Female	DC	43	2 <sup>nd</sup>	NGO administrator
30	Kristen	Female	DC	41	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Government Administrator
31	Jun	Male	DC	50	1.5	Financial analyst
32	Jamie	Female	NY	27	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Government Administrator
33	Amy	Female	DC	30	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Government Administrator
34	Justine	Female	DC	29	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Graphic designer
35	Carol	Female	DC	35	2 <sup>nd</sup>	lawyer
36	Chong	Male	NC	27	1.5	Pharmacist
37	Phillip	Male	DC	27	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Management Consultant
38	Grace	Female	DC	27	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Manager
39	Minsoo	Male	DC	42	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Film Maker
40	Sora	Female	NY	33	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Clerical Worker
41	Young	Male	NY	32	1.5	Military worker (former)
42	Howard	Male	NC	28	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Pastor
43	Joon	Male	NC	25	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Car Mechanic
44	David	Male	NC	26	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Military worker
45	Nadia	Female	NY	34	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dancer
46	Claire	Female	NY	36	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Actress
47	Emil	Male	NY	40	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Journalist
48	Tim	Male	NY	52	1.5	Doctor
49	Sophia	Female	NY	34	1.5	Designer
50	Heesu	Female	NY	32	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Lawyer
51	Suji	Female	NY	42	2 <sup>nd</sup>	NGO administrator
52	Eric	Male	NY	35	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Literary Agent
53	Jeong	Male	NC	37	1.5	Doctor
54	Suki	Female	NC	38	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Doctor
55	Hoon	Male	NC	38	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Doctor
56	Nancy	Female	DC	37	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Government Administrator
57	Ken	Male	DC	46	1.5	Manager
58	Nami	Female	NC	39	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Doctor
59	Sue	Female	NC	26	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Art Editor
60	Linda	Female	NC	50	1.5	Doctor
61	Yuna	Female	NC	36	1.5	Education administrator
62	Yong	Male	NC	39	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Lawyer

63	Jenny	Female	NC	47	1.5	Doctor
64	Lena	Female	NC	34	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Religious worker (former)
65	Hyun	Female	NC	40	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Cosmetologist
66	Henry	Male	NY	33	1.5	Government Administrator
67	Jaegwon	Male	NY	46	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Actor
68	Esther	Female	NC	44	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Doctor
69	Yoon	Male	NC	44	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Art Administrator

---

## References

- Abelmann, Nancy. 2009. *The intimate university : Korean American students and the problems of segregation*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Abelmann, Nancy and John Lie. 1995. *Blue dreams : Korean Americans and the Los Angeles riots*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Alba, Richard D. 1990. *Ethnic identity : the transformation of white America*. New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press.
- Alba, Richard and Victor Nee. 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Alvarez, Alvin N., Linda Juang, and Christopher T. H. Liang. 2006. "Asian Americans and racism: When bad things happen to 'model minorities.'" *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 12:477-492.
- APALC and AAJC. 2011. "A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States: 2011." Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.
- Bacon, Jean. 1999. "Constructing Collective Ethnic Identities: The Case of Second Generation Asian Indians." *Qualitative Sociology* 22:141-160.
- Bankston Iii, Carl L. and Min Zhou. 1997. "The Social Adjustment of Vietnamese American Adolescents: Evidence for a Segmented-Assimilation Approach." *Social Science Quarterly (University of Texas Press)* 78:508-523.
- Barringer, Herbert R., David T. Takeuchi, and Peter Xenos. 1990. "Education, Occupational Prestige, and Income of Asian Americans." *Sociology of Education* 63:27-43.
- Beasley, Maya A. 2011. *Opting out : losing the potential of America's young black elite*. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press.



- Berry, Brent. 2006. "Friends for Better or for Worse: Interracial Friendship in the United States as Seen through Wedding Party Photos." *Demography* 43:491-510.
- Blee, Kathleen M. 1996. "Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazi Groups." *Gender and Society* 10:680-702.
- Bobo, Lawrence D. and Devon Johnson. 2000. "Racial Attitudes in a Prismatic Metropolis: Mapping Identity, Competition, and Views on Affirmative Action." Pp. 81-163 in *Prismatic metropolis : inequality in Los Angeles*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bobo, Lawrence D., James A. Kluegel, and Ryan A. Smith. 1997. "Laissez-Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Antiracist Ideology." Pp. 15-44 in *Racial attitudes in the 1990s : continuity and change*, edited by S. A. Tuch and J. K. Martin. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1997. "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation." *American Sociological Review* 62:465-480.
- . 2002. "We are all Americans!: the Latin Americanization of racial stratification in the USA." *Race and Society* 5:3-16.
- . 2006. *Racism without racists : color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo and David G. Embrick. 2001. "Are Blacks color blind too?: An interview-based analysis of Black Detroiters' racial views." *Race and Society* 4:47-67.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo and Tyrone A. Forman. 2000. "'I Am Not a Racist But...': Mapping White College Students' Racial Ideology in the USA." *Discourse & Society* 11:50-85.

- Bow, Leslie. 2010. *Partly colored : Asian Americans and racial anomaly in the segregated South*. New York: New York University Press.
- Burton, Linda M. 1996. "Age Norms, the Timing of Family Role Transitions, and Intergenerational Caregiving Among Aging African American Women." *The Gerontologist* 36:199-208.
- Carmaz, Kathy and Richard G. Mitchell. 2001. "Grounded Theory in Ethnography." Pp. xviii, 507 p. in *Handbook of ethnography*, edited by P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, and L. Lofland. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE.
- Chávez, Noé Rubén and Sabine Elizabeth French. 2007. "Ethnicity-Related Stressors and Mental Health in Latino Americans: The Moderating Role of Parental Racial Socialization." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 37:1974-1998.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing grounded theory*. London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Chen, Chuansheng and Harold W. Stevenson. 1995. "Motivation and Mathematics Achievement: A Comparative Study of Asian-American, Caucasian-American, and East Asian High School Students." *Child Development* 66:1215-1234.
- Chen, L. A. 1998. *From the boat to the melting pot: A contextual examination of parental ethnic socialization and children's ethnic attitudes and knowledge among immigrant Chinese families*: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University.
- Chou, Rosalind and Joe R. Feagin. 2008. *The myth of the model minority : Asian Americans facing racism*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Chung, AngieY. 2013. "From Caregivers to Caretakers: The Impact of Family Roles on Ethnicity Among Children of Korean and Chinese Immigrant Families." *Qualitative Sociology* 36:279-302.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. *Black feminist thought : knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

- Cose, Ellis. 1993. *The rage of a privileged class*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Dhingra, Pawan. 2007. *Managing multicultural lives : Asian American professionals and the challenge of multiple identities*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Dhingra, Pawan H. 2003. "Being American Between Black and White: Second-Generation Asian American Professionals' Racial Identities." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6:117-147.
- Englash, Ron. 2002. "Race, Sex, and Nerds: From Black Geeks To Asian American Hipsters." *Social Text* 20:49-64.
- Espiritu, Yen Le. 2008. *Asian American women and men : labor, laws, and love*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Essed, Philomena. 1991. *Understanding everyday racism : an interdisciplinary theory*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Feagin, Joe R. 2014. *Latinos facing racism : discrimination, resistance, and endurance*, Edited by J. A. Cobas. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Feagin, Joe R. and Melvin P. Sikes. 1994. *Living with racism : the black middle-class experience*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.
- Fernandez, Roberto M. and Fernandez-Mateo, Isabel. 2006. "Networks, Race, and Hiring." *American Sociological Review* 71:42-71.
- Flores, GlendaMarisol. 2011. "Racialized Tokens: Latina Teachers Negotiating, Surviving and Thriving in a White Woman's Profession." *Qualitative Sociology* 34:313-335.
- Fozdar, Farida. 2008. "Duelling discourses, shared weapons: rhetorical techniques used to challenge racist arguments." *Discourse & Society* 19:529-547.

- Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. "White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness." 289.
- Gandara, Patricia C. 1995. *Over the ivy walls : the educational mobility of low-income Chicanos*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Gans, Herbert J. 1992. "Second-generation decline: Scenarios for the economic and ethnic futures of the post--1965 American immigrants." *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 15:173.
- García-López, Gladys. 2008. "'NUNCA TE TOMAN EN CUENTA [THEY NEVER TAKE YOU INTO ACCOUNT]': The Challenges of Inclusion and Strategies for Success of Chicana Attorneys." *Gender and Society* 22:590-612.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 1999. "The Social Construction and Institutionalization of Gender and Race." Pp. 3-43 in *Revisioning Gender*, edited by M. M. Ferree, J. Lorber, and B. B. Hess. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Gordon, Milton Myron. 1964. *Assimilation in American life: the role of race, religion, and national origins*. New York,: Oxford University Press.
- Goyette, Kimberly and Yu Xie. 1999. "Educational Expectations of Asian American Youths: Determinants and Ethnic Differences." *Sociology of Education* 72:22-36.
- Hamamoto, Darrell Y. 1994. *Monitored peril : Asian Americans and the politics of TV representation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Harrison, Lawrence E. 1992. *Who prospers? : how cultural values shape economic and political success*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hing, Bill Ong. 1993. *Making and remaking Asian America through immigration policy, 1850-1990*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

- Hirsh, Elizabeth and Christopher J. Lyons. 2010. "Perceiving Discrimination on the Job: Legal Consciousness, Workplace Context, and the Construction of Race Discrimination." *Law & Society Review* 44:269-298.
- Hoberman, John M. 1997. *Darwin's athletes : how sport has damaged Black America and preserved the myth of race*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Hochschild, Jennifer L. 1995. *Facing up to the American dream : race, class, and the soul of the nation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hollinger, David A. 2005. "The One Drop Rule & the One Hate Rule." *Daedalus* 134:18-28.
- Huffman, Matt L. and Philip N. Cohen. 2004. "Racial Wage Inequality: Job Segregation and Devaluation across the U.S. Labor Markets." *American Journal of Sociology* 109.
- Hughes, Diane, James Rodriguez, Emilie P. Smith, Deborah J. Johnson, Howard C. Stevenson, and Paul Spicer. 2006. "Parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices: A review of research and directions for future study." *Developmental Psychology* 42:747-770.
- Johnson, Jeffrey C. and Susan C. Weller. 2002. "Elicitation Techniques for Interviewing." Pp. xiii, 981 p. in *Handbook of interview research : context & method*, edited by J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Jung, Moon-Kie. 2009. "THE RACIAL UNCONSCIOUS OF ASSIMILATION THEORY." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 6:375-395.
- Junn, Jane. 2007. "From Coolie to Model Minority." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 4:355-373.
- Kao, Grace and Kara Joyner. 2004. "Do Race and Ethnicity Matter among Friends? Activities among Interracial, Interethnic, and Intraethnic Adolescent Friends." *The Sociological Quarterly* 45:557-573.

- Kao, Grace and Marta Tienda. 1995. "Optimism and Achievement: The Educational Performance of Immigrant Youth." *Social Science Quarterly (University of Texas Press)* 76:1-19.
- Kibria, Nazli. 2000. "Race, Ethnic Options, and Ethnic Binds: Identity Negotiations of Second-Generation Chinese and Korean Americans." *Sociological Perspectives* 43:77-95.
- . 2002. *Becoming Asian American : second-generation Chinese and Korean American identities*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kim, Andrew Tae-Hyun. 2011. "Culture Matters: Cultural Differences in the Reporting of Employment Discrimination Claims." *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal* 20:405-55.
- Kim, ChangHwan and Arthur Sakamoto. 2010. "Have Asian American Men Achieved Labor Market Parity with White Men?" *American Sociological Review* 75:934-957.
- Kim, Claire Jean. 1999. "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans." *Politics & Society* 27:105-138.
- . 2000. *Bitter fruit : the politics of Black-Korean conflict in New York City*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kim, Eun-Young. 1993. "Career Choice among Second-Generation Korean-Americans: Reflections of a Cultural Model of Success." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 24:224-248.
- Kim, Illsoo. 1981. *New urban immigrants : the Korean community in New York*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Kim, Nadia. 2008a. "Critical Thoughts on Asian American Assimilation in the Whitening Literature." in *Racism in Post-Racism America: New Theories, New Directions*, edited by C. A. Gallagher. Chapel Hill, NC: Social Forces.

- Kim, Nadia Y. 2008b. *Imperial citizens : Koreans and race from Seoul to LA*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Kuo, Wen H. 1995. "Coping with racial discrimination: the case of Asian Americans." *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 18:109-127.
- Lacy, Karyn R. 2007. *Blue-chip Black : race, class, and status in the new Black middle class*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67:747-776.
- . 2011. *Unequal childhoods : class, race, and family life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lee, Elizabeth M. and Grace Kao. 2009. "Less bang for the buck? Cultural capital and immigrant status effects on kindergarten academic outcomes." *Poetics* 37:201-226.
- Lee, Jennifer and Frank Bean. 2004. "America's Changing Color Lines: Immigration, Race/Ethnicity, and Multiracial Identification." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:221-42.
- Lee, Robert G. 1999. *Orientalists : Asian Americans in popular culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lee, Sara S. 2004. "Class Matters: Racial and Ethnic Identities of Working- and Middle-Class Second-Generation Korean Americans in New York City." in *Becoming New Yorkers : ethnographies of the new second generation*, edited by P. Kasnitz, J. H. Mollenkopf, and M. C. Waters. New York: Russell Sage.
- Lee, Stacey J. 1996. *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype : listening to Asian American youth*. New York ; London: Teachers College Press.

- Lew, Jamie. 2006. *Asian Americans in class : charting the achievement gap among Korean American youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Li, Wei. 2009. *Ethnoburb : the new ethnic community in urban America*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Loewen, James W. 1988. *The Mississippi Chinese : between Black and white*. Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press.
- Louie, Vivian S. 2004. *Compelled to excel : immigration, education, and opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Massey, Douglass and Nancy Denton. 2008. "American Apartheid: segregation and the making of the underclass." in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, edited by D. B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Matsuda, Mari J. 1996. *Where is your body? : and other essays on race, gender, and the law*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- McLoyd, Vonnie C., Ana Mari Cauce, David Takeuchi, and Leon Wilson. 2000. "Marital Processes and Parental Socialization in Families of Color: A Decade Review of Research." *Journal of Marriage & Family* 62:1070-1093.
- McNamee, Stephen J. and Robert K. Miller. 2004. *The meritocracy myth*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook. 2001. "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:415-444.
- Min, Pyong Gap. 1988. *Ethnic business enterprise : Korean small business in Atlanta*. New York: Center for Migration Studies.
- . 1992. "The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States." *International Migration Review* 26:1370-1394.



- . 1996. *Caught in the middle : Korean communities in New York and Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1998. *Changes and conflicts : Korean immigrant families in New York*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- . 2002. *The second generation : ethnic identity among Asian Americans*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- . 2006a. "Korean Americans." in *Asian-Americans : contemporary trends and issues*, edited by P. G. Min. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.
- . 2006b. "Settlement Patterns and Diversity." Pp. 32-53 in *Asian Americans : Contemporary Trends and Issues*, edited by P. G. Min. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.
- . 2010. *Preserving ethnicity through religion in America : Korean Protestants and Indian Hindus across generations*. New York: New York University Press.
- Min, Pyong gap and Sou Hyun Jang. 2013. "Asian Americans' Concentration in STEM and Healthcare Fields of Study and Occupations." Manuscript.
- Min, Pyong Gap and Rose Kim. 2000. "Formation of ethnic and racial identities: narratives by young Asian-American professionals." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23:735 - 760.
- Mossakowski, Krysia N. 2003. "Coping with Perceived Discrimination: Does Ethnic Identity Protect Mental Health?" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44:318-331.
- Nagata, Donna K. 1993. *Legacy of injustice : exploring the cross-generational impact of the Japanese American internment*. New York: Plenum Press.

- Nelson, Jacqueline K. 2013. "Denial of racism and its implications for local action." *Discourse & Society* 24:89-109.
- O'Brien, Eileen. 2008. *The racial middle : Latinos and Asian Americans living beyond the racial divide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Okimoto, Gary Y. 1994. *Margins and mainstreams : Asians in American history and culture*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Ong, Paul M., Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng. 1994. *The New Asian immigration in Los Angeles and global restructuring*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Operario, Don and Susan T. Fiske. 2001. "Ethnic Identity Moderates Perceptions of Prejudice: Judgments of Personal Versus Group Discrimination and Subtle Versus Blatant Bias." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27:550-561.
- Osajima, K. 1993. "The Hidden Injuries of Race." Pp. 81-91 in *Bearing dreams, shaping visions : Asian Pacific American perspectives*, edited by L. A. Revilla and Association for Asian American Studies. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press.
- Ou, Young-shi and Harriette Pipes McAdoo. 1993. "Socialization of Chinese American children." Pp. 245-270 in *Family ethnicity: Strength in diversity*, edited by H. P. McAdoo. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Paek, Hye Jin and Hemant Shah. 2003. "Racial Ideology, Model Minorities, and the "Not-So-Silent Partner:" Stereotyping of Asian Americans in U.S. Magazine Advertising." *Howard Journal of Communications* 14:225 - 243.
- Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108:937-975.

- Pager, Devah and Quillian, Lincoln 2005. "Walking the Talk? What Employers Say Versus what They Do." *American Sociological Review* 70:355-380.
- Pager, Devah and Hana Shepherd. 2008. "The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34:181-209.
- Park, Lisa Sun-Hee. 2005. *Consuming citizenship : children of Asian immigrant entrepreneurs*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Pattillo, Mary E. 1999. *Black picket fences : privilege and peril among the Black middle class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Perry, Pamela. 2001. "White Means Never Having to Say You're Ethnic: White Youth and the Construction of "Cultureless" Identities." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30:56-91.
- Petersen, William. 1966. "Success Story, Japanese-American Style." Pp. 20ff in *The New York Times Magazine*.
- Portes, Alejandro and Rubén G. Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies : the story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley; New York: University of California Press; Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, Alejandro and Min Zhou. 1993. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530:74-96.
- Purkayastha, Bandana. 2005. *Negotiating ethnicity : second-generation South Asian Americans traverse a transnational world*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Pyke, Karen. 2000. "'The Normal American Family' as an Interpretive Structure of Family Life among Grown Children of Korean and Vietnamese Immigrants." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62:240-255.

- Pyke, Karen D. and Denise L. Johnson. 2003. "Asian American Women and Racialized Femininities: "Doing" Gender across Cultural Worlds." *Gender and Society* 17:33-53.
- Pyke, Karen and Tran Dang. 2003. "'FOB" and "Whitewashed": Identity and Internalized Racism Among Second Generation Asian Americans." *Qualitative Sociology* 26:147-172.
- Roediger, David. 1999. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. New York: Verso Press.
- Royster, Deirdre. 2003. *Race and the Invisible Hand: How White Networks Excluded Black Men from Blue-Collar Jobs*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sakamoto, Arthur, Kimberly A. Goyette, and ChangHwan Kim. 2009. "Socioeconomic Attainments of Asian Americans." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:255-276.
- Sakamoto, Arthur, Huei-Hsia Wu, and Jessie M. Tzeng. 2000. "The Declining Significance of Race among American Men during the Latter Half of the Twentieth Century." *Demography* 37:41-51.
- Sarkisian, Natalia, Mariana Gerena, and Naomi Gerstel. 2007. "Extended Family Integration Among Euro and Mexican Americans: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class." *Journal of Marriage & Family* 69:40-54.
- Sarkisian, Natalia and Naomi Gerstel. 2004. "Kin Support among Blacks and Whites: Race and Family Organization." *American Sociological Review* 69:812-837.
- Schwalbe, Michael, Sandra Godwin, Daphne Holden, Douglas Schrock, Shealy Thompson, and Michele Wolkomir. 2000. "Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality: An Interactionist Analysis." *Social Forces* 79:419-452.

- Scott, Lionel D., Jr. 2003. "The Relation of Racial Identity and Racial Socialization to Coping with Discrimination among African American Adolescents." *Journal of Black Studies* 33:520-538.
- Sewell, W H and Robert M Hauser. 1980. "'The Wisconsin Longitudinal Study of Social and Psychological Factors in Aspirations and Achievements.'" *Research in Sociology of Education and Socialization* 1:59-99.
- Skrentny, John David. 2001. *Color lines : affirmative action, immigration, and civil rights options for America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Somers, Margaret R. 1994. "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach." *Theory and Society* 23:605-649.
- Song, Miri. 1999. *Helping out : children's labor in ethnic businesses*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Stack, Carol. 1974. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Stanton-Salazar, Ricardo D. 1997. "A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths." *Harvard Educational Review* 67:1-40.
- Steele, Claude M. 1997. "A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance." *American Psychologist* 52:613-629.
- Steinberg, Laurence, Sanford M. Dornbusch, and B. Bradford Brown. 1992. "Ethnic differences in adolescent achievement: An ecological perspective." *American Psychologist* 47:723-729.
- Strauss, Anselm L. and Juliet M. Corbin. 1990. *Basics of qualitative research : grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

- Sue, Stanley and Sumie Okazaki. 1990. "Asian-American Educational Achievements: A Phenomenon in Search of an Explanation." *American Psychologist* 45:913-920.
- Sun, Yongmin. 1998. "The Academic Success of East-Asian-American Students--An Investment Model." *Social Science Research* 27:432-456.
- Swartz, Teresa Toguchi. 2009. "Intergenerational Family Relations in Adulthood: Patterns, Variations, and Implications in the Contemporary United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:191-212.
- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 1997. *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race*. New York: BasicBooks.
- Taylor, Charles R., Stacy Landreth, and Hae-Kyong Bang. 2005. "Asian Americans in Magazine Advertising: Portrayals of the "Model Minority"." *Journal of Macromarketing* 25:163-174.
- Tomaskovic-Devey, Donald, Melvin Thomas, and Kecia Johnson. 2005. "Race and the Accumulation of Human Capital across the Career: A Theoretical Model and Fixed-Effects Application." *American Journal of Sociology* 111:58-89.
- Tuan, Mia. 1998. *Forever foreigners or honorary whites? : the Asian ethnic experience today*. New Brunswick, N.J. ; London: Rutgers University Press.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1998. "State and Metropolitan Area Data Book 1997-98."
- Van Dijk, Teun A. 1987. *Communicating racism : ethnic prejudice in thought and talk*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- . 1992. "Discourse and the Denial of Racism." *Discourse & Society* 3:87-118.
- . 2006. "Ideology and discourse analysis." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11:115-140.

- Walton, Emily. 2012. "Resurgent Ethnicity among Asian Americans: Ethnic Neighborhood Context and Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 53:378-394.
- Waters, Mary C. 1990. *Ethnic options : choosing identities in America*. Berkeley ; Oxford: University of California Press.
- . 1999. *Black identities : West Indian immigrant dreams and American realities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Russell Sage Foundation ; Harvard University Press.
- Wetherell, Margaret and Jonathan Potter. 1992. "Mapping the language of racism : discourse and the legitimation of exploitation." New York ; Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Wilson, William Julius. 1978. *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged. The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wingfield, Adia Harvey. 2010. "Are Some Emotions Marked "Whites Only"? Racialized Feeling Rules in Professional Workplaces." *Social Problems* 57:251-268.
- Wingfield, Adia Harvey and Renée Skeete Alston. 2013. "Maintaining Hierarchies in Predominantly White Organizations: A Theory of Racial Tasks." *American Behavioral Scientist*.
- Wodak, Ruth. 1996. "The Genesis of Racist Discourse in Austria Since 1989." Pp. 107-28 in *Texts and practices : readings in critical discourse analysis*, edited by C. R. Caldas-Coulthard and M. Coulthard. London: Routledge.
- . 1997. "Das Ausland and Anti-Semitic Discourse: The Discursive Construction of the Other." Pp. 68-87 in *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse*, edited by S. H. Riggins. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Wong, Morrison G. 1980. "Changes in Socioeconomic Status of the Chinese Male Population in the United States from 1960 to 1970." *International Migration Review* 14:511-524.
- Woo, Deborah. 2000. *Glass ceilings and Asian Americans : the new face of workplace barriers*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press.
- Wu, Frank H. 2002. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. New York: Basic Books.
- Xie, Yu and Kimberly Goyette. 2003. "Social mobility and the educational choices of Asian Americans." *Social Science Research* 32:467-498.
- Xie, Yu and Kimberly A. Goyette. 2004. *A demographic portrait of Asian Americans*, Edited by B. Population Reference and F. Russell Sage. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation ; Washington, DC : Population Reference Bureau.
- Xu, Jun and Jennifer C. Lee. 2013. "The Marginalized "Model" Minority: An Empirical Examination of the Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans." *Social Forces* 91:1363-1397.
- Yancey, George A. 2003. *Who is white? : Latinos, Asians, and the new black/nonblack divide*. Boulder, Colo.: L. Rienner.
- Yoon, In-Jin. 1997. *On my own : Korean businesses and race relations in America*. Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press.
- Zhou, M. I. N. and Susan Kim. 2006. "Community Forces, Social Capital, and Educational Achievement: The Case of Supplementary Education in the Chinese and Korean Immigrant Communities." *Harvard Educational Review* 76:1-29.
- Zhou, Min. 1992. *Chinatown : the socioeconomic potential of an urban enclave*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.



- . 1999. "Coming of Age: The Current Situation of Asian American Children." *Amerasia Journal* 25:1-27.
- Zhou, Min and Carl L. Bankston. 1998. *Growing up American : how Vietnamese children adapt to life in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Zhou, Min and Jennifer Lee. 2007. "Becoming Ethnic or Becoming American?" *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 4:189-205.
- Zhou, Min, Jennifer Lee, Jody Agius Vallejo, Rosaura Tafoya-Estrada, and Yang Sao Xiong. 2008. "Success Attained, Deterred, and Denied: Divergent Pathways to Social Mobility in Los Angeles's New Second Generation." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 620:37-61.

## Biography

Inseo Son was born in Seoul, Korea, on October 17<sup>th</sup>. He earned his bachelor's degree in history from Hankook University of Foreign Studies in February 1998 and his M.A. in sociology from Sogang University in February 2001. His paper, titled "Partly Colored or Almost White?: Racial Intermediacy and Identificational Ambivalence of Grown Children of Korean Immigrants," is scheduled for publication in *Discourse and Society*. He was awarded Janet Chiang Grant by APSI, Duke University (2013); Summer Research Fellowship by the Graduate School, Duke University (2013); Linda G. George Grant by Department of Sociology, Duke University (2012); The Global Society of Korea and America Dissertation Scholarship by the Research Center for Korean Community, CUNY (2011); Korean Honor Scholarship by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the U.S. (2010).